LITERATURE *IN* THE SCHOOLS

Marion Agnes Dogherty

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How to Present Poetry and Make Book Lovers

By

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To

KATHARINE H. SHUTE

INSPIRING TEACHER

and

GERTRUDE E. BIGELOW

ABLE AND SYMPATHETIC

LEADER

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INTRODUCTION

THERE is a fundamental difference between the principles that govern the teaching of literature and those which guide the teaching of other subjects. Even in the various departments of English itself there should be a sharp line drawn between the literature which represents the romantic, humanistic side, and the technical language-study, with spelling and grammar, which represents the scientific, utilitarian side. In these other branches, we keep in mind several objects to be attained; but in the teaching of literature, we have one particular goal, which never varies, but is as constant as the northern star. That one end, the fulfillment of which is fixed in the distant future, is the relation which the pupil is going to have toward books by and by. The literature teacher is there to create; to create book-lovers. The creation of anything requires vision, imagination, patience, and a joyous outlook. For these the teacher in literature prays daily.

There is, of course, a multitude of facts,

plain facts, that all people must possess if they are to lead useful, comfortable lives. They *must* know the tables of addition and multiplication, for instance; the letters and their combinations to produce words; they must know how to read and write, how to subtract and divide, and an indeterminate quantity of fragments from the great quarry of knowledge, if they are to carry on the business of living. The word *must* makes its presence felt in most of the tasks that the school seeks to accomplish. But in the domain of literature it should rarely be admitted. That idea is largely the theme of the pages that follow. It is the alpha, the omega, and the central thought. To lead the pupil to *want* to do a thing is the highest function in all teaching; in literature it is the one essential, for failing in that, we fail in all.

The greatest teacher is the one who teaches us how to live. No one person, however, can alone accomplish such a solemn task. Time, experience, affection, sorrow, life itself,—all these, as well as people, are uniting daily to teach each one of us how to get the most from life.

A large part of man's life is leisure, a much larger part than he is willing to admit. How he uses this leisure is a tremendous force in

the making or the marring of his life. The teacher who successfully leads him to spend some part of that leisure every day in the company of the great minds of the world, the company of the novelists and poets, is doing him an incalculable service. Therefore, in a very real way, the teacher of literature has it in her power to be one of these contributing forces that are teaching him how to live. Realizing this, at times, she falters under a responsibility so enormous; yet, realizing it, too, she learns to discard the unworthy things and to embrace the worthy ones, in so far as, with her limitations, she is able.

Perhaps some thought in this book may help the new and inexperienced teacher whose mind is open to suggestions from those who have had longer life than she. But if these pages might convince some who are not new and not inexperienced that they are surrendering what is great for what is small, that they are sacrificing the spiritual to the literal, the beautiful to the commonplace, that they are allowing the glorious study of literature to become a mere acquiring of statistical knowledge, — if these pages might only carry a message to them, then the book is justified and the writer repaid.

LITERATURE IN THE SCHOOLS

CULTIVATING A TASTE FOR POETRY

"I WOULD the gods had made thee poetical!" cries Touchstone of the nimble wit to Audrey, honest dullard and literalist; and while we smile at the ill-matched pair, we nevertheless perceive some wisdom in Touchstone's little jest. Shakespeare has portrayed two common types. Still there are the Touchstones and still the Audreys — more or less modified — and it is for the Audreys, not only born but made, that this plea is offered.

> A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more.
>
> The soft blue sky did never melt
> Into his heart; he never felt
> The witchery of the soft blue sky!

Thus Wordsworth has immortalized the male Audrey. Sad indeed is the lot of all the Audreys, male and female, and sadder because they do not know their poverty.

It may not, as Touchstone seems to think, remain wholly with the gods to bestow the

golden gift of imagination. If that faculty of the mind may be cultivated, then it is not solely the possession of the favored. I believe that the imaginative eye, the "inward eye," of all children may be opened, little by little, until their vision is enlarged and their sympathies broadened. The degree depends upon the people who have the child in their keeping, and on his natural gifts.

It is the mother's privilege to begin the gentle process, and the educator's opportunity to go on with it. And the school can do nothing more important or more essential to the happiness of the individual than to develop the power to imagine which lies in every soul, albeit sleeping in some. Charles W. Eliot says:

> The imagination is the greatest of human powers, no matter in what field it works — in art or literature, in mechanical invention, in science, government, commerce, or religion; and the training of the imagination is therefore far the most important part of education.

And again:

> Education for efficiency must not be materialistic, prosaic, or utilitarian; it must be idealistic, humane, and passionate, or it will not win its goal.

How, then, shall we cultivate to its greatest capacity this power of the mind — the ability to image what the eye does not see? Play accomplishes something, for the play the child likes best is always the make-believe kind. But his play is limited to the familiar things in his little life; it does not take him out of his own circumscribed world. In the intelligent study of geography and history there is much opportunity for the exercise of the imaginative powers; and music and art bring their humanizing influence. But there is nothing like the sympathetic study of great literature to create for us new worlds of thought and action.

> There is no frigate like a book
> To take us lands away,
> Nor any courser like a page
> Of prancing poetry.
> This traverse may the poorest take
> Without oppress of toil;
> How frugal is the chariot
> That bears the human soul.

And again:

> He ate and drank the precious word,
> His spirit grew robust;
> He knew no more that he was poor,
> Nor that his frame was dust.

He danced along the dingy days,
And this bequest of wings
Was but a book — what liberty
A loosened spirit brings!

In the time given to the study of English in our schools, the large share is generally devoted to the purely technical side of the subject. The feeling persists that periods and quotation marks are more vital than the capacity to enjoy a good book. There is, as a rule, more concern over Tom's ability to distribute commas and scent verbs than over the woeful lack of his book-shelf. In the present course of study for the intermediate schools occurs the following:

> *Memorizing.* Not less than 50 and not more than 200 lines, to include not only narrative poems and lyrics, but also sterling prose, such as the Gettysburg Address. . . . *Pupils are to be able to write correctly and to punctuate intelligently the passages learned.*

The goblin, you see, is introduced into the fairy's palace. Caliban must growl lest Ariel prove too enchanting. Can one conceive discussing commas while teaching Lincoln's solemn words at Gettysburg? I would as soon connect them with the Ten Command-

ments or the Sermon on the Mount. It is introducing the cuisine in the drawing-room; it is Banquo's ghost at the feast.

Not that the study of punctuation is unimportant — it is imperative; but it has its place, and its place is the academic workshop. How many of us, I wonder, could punctuate intelligently the lines of verse that have remained in our memory? Do the authors themselves always punctuate as they should? The proof-readers will whisper "No." And even proof-readers have been known to make mistakes. One is embarrassed by some of the new text-books where colons are used for semi-colons and semi-colons for commas so often as to call forth the criticism of intelligent pupils.

Notice, too, the limit placed on the amount they may memorize. Two hundred, but no more! You must say "Halt!" to the pupil who specially enjoys fine poetry and readily commits it, when he has reached the 200-line limit in the ninth, the 100-line limit in the eighth, and the 50-line limit in the seventh grade. Here is the bogey of standardization again.

Yet, notwithstanding this restriction, many teachers follow purely human methods in this respect. Such teachers find that the limit

varies with the individual, and that with some individuals there is no limit. Last year in the ninth grade I invited girls to learn as many poems as they desired. As far as I know, this volunteer work did not interfere with any of their other studies; and I hope it may make them better women and finer citizens. The record follows:

Author	*Poem*	*Number who learned the poem*
Browning,	Apparitions	34
Bryant,	To a Waterfowl	4
Burns,	Flow Gently Sweet Afton	1
"	John Anderson	3
"	Oh, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast	3
"	For A' That and A' That	1
Emerson,	Each and All	1
Holmes,	The Last Leaf	29
Scott,	Evening	3
"	Coronach	10
"	Jock of Hazeldean	11
"	Pibroch of Donald Dhu	1
Tennyson,	Crossing the Bar	13
Whittier,	Telling the Bees	3
"	In School Days	1
Wordsworth,	The Solitary Reaper	2
"	To the Cuckoo	1
"	To the Small Celandine	1

The choice is interesting. It is easy to understand the appeal to a young girl of Jock of Hazeldean, but that "Crossing the Bar"

and the "Coronach" should awaken such a response is surprising. The extreme brevity of Browning's "Apparitions" might explain the large number of devotees of that poem but would not account for the almost general fondness for "The Last Leaf." One little rascal who was decidedly intractable was completely won over to law and order by poetry, and learned of her own accord seven poems, one of which was "Each and All," which has sixty-one lines — lines of depth and philosophy. She surprised us all with it one bright morning and recited it with real conviction.

Of course all this memorizing on the part of individuals was purely free-will work done by lovers of poetry. The real foundation for this outside work was the study and committing to memory in the classroom of a great deal of English poetry. Learning in the manner I am trying to indicate, without its ever becoming a task, proved so pleasurable that they were tempted to try a little on their own initiative.

My plea is particularly for poetry, for that is neglected more than prose, and its power to stir the imagination is immeasurably greater. "It is the marvellous property of verse," says

Froude, "that the metrical and rhythmic sound is able to catch and express back to us, not the stories of actions, but the *actions themselves*." That is why a poem loses its very life when paraphrased.

There is a pretty story showing the reverence which even a warrior may feel for a great poem. Among the treasures that were taken from Darius when Alexander conquered Persia was a very precious casket, which was brought to Alexander as a great rarity. Turning to those about him, he asked what they thought most worthy to be laid in anything so choice, and when they had expressed their various opinions, this conqueror of worlds announced that he would keep Homer's *Iliad* in it.

Coleridge has said:

> Poetry has been to me its own exceeding great reward: it has soothed my afflictions; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared solitude; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me.

And not alone to the creator of poetry do all these blessings come; for to the lover of poetry, besides the enjoyment that comes from

reading it, there is the magic that it works in his daily life. He, too, acquires the habit of looking for the good and the beautiful in all things. The flowers, the birds, the sea, the sky — all are more beautiful because of the poems he has read touching these things; in short, he sees them with the poet's eye, borrowed for a space. To him, too, solitude is endeared, for the possession of poetry has enriched it immeasurably; indeed to such a one there is no solitude, for he can at will be in the company of the great.

> Let me go where'er I will,
> I hear a sky-born music still;
> It sounds from all things old,
> It sounds from all things young,
> From all that 's fair, from all that 's foul,
> Peals out a cheerful song.
>
> 'T is not in the high stars alone,
> Nor in the cup of budding flowers,
> Nor in the redbreast's mellow tone,
> Nor in the bow that smiles in showers,
> But in the mud and scum of things
> There alway, alway something sings.

If we can cultivate this outlook of Emerson's, life becomes tremendously brightened. The commonplace, the ugly, the everyday sights and sounds that seen and heard alone would weigh us down, take on something

transforming if we see beyond the material into the soul of things.

Edwin Markham once told a group of girls that the poet looked on all things with a different eye. Where they saw, for instance, an old woman and merely an old woman, he saw a human figure which was the embodiment of the sorrows and joys of a lifetime. The stooped shoulders mean to him perhaps burdens nobly borne; the slow-moving limbs the weariness of countless journeys, joyous and sad; the dimmed eyes tell him of tears and laughter; he sees, in short, the panorama of a lifetime because of his gift of sympathetic imagination.

Of such a gift we are all in need to make us more gentle in our judgments, more charitable in our hearts. If the *making* of poetry can so enlarge the mental outlook and the sympathies, then the reading of it can do something in the same direction. We cannot measure the influence of the poet on the lives of others.

> Vain was the chief's, the sage's pride!
> They had no poet and they died.

But perhaps we do not yet understand this. It is astonishing to see how great a propor-

tion of the reading public never think of reading poetry. Ask the business man, for instance, if he is familiar with a classic in verse, and he is almost affronted. He will probably reply that he does not read poetry — so much the worse for poetry!

But it is not altogether the fault of our men and women that they are so ignorant of the literary riches of the ages. Their loss very often may be traced to those early days of school, when the mind is hospitable and easily influenced. If, in their eager young souls, the seeds of beauty and imaginative thought had been more generously sown, their harvest of today would be more abundant and their horizon larger and more fair.

A bright little girl of seven recited to me recently, because her mother had asked her, Longfellow's "The Day Is Done," which she rendered in a mechanical voice without a seeming ray of intelligence. She put real feeling, however, into her commentary at the end, when she exclaimed hotly, "I hate poetry!" No wonder, indeed! Only a miracle could have prevented such a result in the mind of a perfectly healthy, human little girl. Her teacher had done the iniquitous thing — she had assigned to a group of innocents an un-

familiar and to them unintelligible poem for learning. The result was natural — they hated it and, being children they hated all poetry because of it.

The unintelligent teaching of poetry is far worse than no teaching at all, because it creates a profound dislike for the whole realm of poetry which often lasts throughout life.

In his book on William Shakespeare, Mabie, alluding to Shakespeare and Burns, says:

> Their supreme good fortune lay in the fact that they were educated through the imagination rather than through the memory and the rationalizing faculties. Homer, Æschylus, and Sophocles were educated by the same method; so also was Dante. A man sometimes gets this kind of education in the schools, but he oftener misses it. He is always supremely fortunate if he gets it at all.

There was the old-fashioned custom, now happily extinct, of parsing a fine poem, making the beautiful lines serve the uses of grammar, and so, if you disliked grammar, you forever after disliked that poem and perhaps all poetry. Still, there is the lover of detail, the apostle of facts, who requires her pupils to learn where the author was born, when he

was born, where he died and when he died, where he was buried and so on, ad infinitum. We all err more or less in this direction when we begin, but the children soon set us right. Such folly was mine, and it received its proper rebuke. I was teaching Longfellow to a class of young children, and I told of his many literary friendships. One can imagine the ennui of these healthy little animals as I held forth on the poet's high-brow friends. Some days after, this is what I received:

"Longfellow had many fast friends, about the fastest was Phœbe Cary."

Across the corridor my good friend was teaching Whittier. Now her specialty was ancestry, and she was at great pains to explain to the children that, before her marriage, the poet's mother was one Abigail Hussey. And this is what *she* got:

"John Whittier's father was a farmer but his mother was a hussy."

If the teacher could n't be human the children saw to it that the poets were.

Of such methods William Hawley Smith writes:

> What can or does such teaching of literature amount to? Absolutely nothing! Yes, often worse than nothing. For the boredom of it and

> the agony that it inflicts upon the pupil create a hatred of literature that is often never overcome. Such a method is dead and should be buried. It is a stench in the nostrils of any true lover of literature.

Almost as bad in its after effects is the method sometimes used in secondary schools, which is as follows: the pupil is given a drama of Shakespeare and ordered to read the first act or a portion thereof and to be ready to report on it at the following lesson. Now, if Shakespeare were perfectly simple and easy reading, this method might answer fairly well. But since scholars have been spending their whole lifetime every generation, trying to make clear the meaning of many things in his plays, and then have not wholly succeeded, and since a certain amount of culture and background are generally the possession of the lover of Shakespeare, is n't it a little hard on uninitiated boys and girls to plunge them into this sea of troubles and ask them to swim out alone? Moreover, if the student does really get the plot of the play, and intelligently discusses it, he is far from knowing Shakespeare. The plots are seldom his, but the beauty and wisdom belong to him alone.

Of course, properly to appreciate Shake-

speare we should have a permanent Shakespearean theatre where every boy and girl could behold the living characters. But since we have not that, the teacher must tax her every power to make the play a pulsing, moving thing. She must make the people in the play human, and to do this the students must hear the lines read more intelligently than they can possibly read them. She must change her voice, she must call on all her powers of expression, she must suit the action to the word whenever she can. She must be a thousand things: she must portray to them the wisdom and sweetness of Rosalind, the cruelty and pathos of Shylock, the lovely innocence of Miranda, the loftiness of Brutus, the transcendent womanliness of Portia, the admirable arrogance of Caesar, and so on. And this she can best do, ambitious though it may seem, by reading the text and illuminating it with her voice and her intelligence.

It is a delightful thing to see a class wake up to the sheer human quality in one of Shakespeare's plays. Every chord in human feeling is touched. They smile, they are sad, they are made reverent, they are amused, their pity is aroused, their affections are

ennobled, and throughout they are held by the wonder and the romance of it all. But the teacher is needed to awaken this love of Shakespeare. No home reading, no digging away at notes can possibly accomplish it.

Only a few weeks ago a young teacher was trying to interest a class in *As You Like It*. Her method was to select the difficult words occurring in the scene and to assign them for home study. The pupils were to look up the meaning of each word and study its spelling. The next day the time was spent in explaining the words carefully, each girl being minutely examined on her preparation, and then the teacher dictated the words for a spelling lesson. Now what one wonders is what all this has to do with Shakespeare, for as Hamlet himself says, "The play's the thing," and no amount of word-study can take its place.

It is to such methods, some of them practices of a generation ago, and some of them still lustily surviving, that many men and women owe their indifference to the great treasure-house of English poetry — the richest treasure-house in the world of poetry.

The methods employed in the teaching of

arithmetic will not serve for the teaching of literature. So much depends on our approach; not the things of to-day alone, but of to-morrow and the years to come. If we can lure these little people into the elysian fields of the world's best poetry, let us play the piper. But if we cannot lure them, let us never try to force them.

For the multiplication table the autocratic method may suffice, but that is another story. If the child hates the multiplication table after capturing it, we do not care; it does not matter; we do not expect him to sit down in middle life and *enjoy* the multiplication table — in fact, the idea is distinctly repellent. Our object is merely that he shall master it for use now.

How different is our purpose in the teaching of poetry! Here we are building for the future and with the things of the spirit. We are in the realm of art and should approach with reverence and fear. There can be no higher work in all teaching than this aiming to awaken souls to the beautiful and to cultivate an enduring love for good books. And there is nothing you can teach that will give you the pure enjoyment that this affords. To see faces that are often heavy and inert

light up suddenly with the appreciation of what is beautiful and good — this is the reward of the teacher of literature.

And how shall we awaken this finer appreciation? How shall we present poetry so that it shall not bore but delight? For it is on our beginning that the child's later attitude will depend. First of all, any teacher who finds the teaching of poetry a burden should be persuaded to lay down that burden or place it on the shoulders of one who will touch it with magic and give it wings. Only those who have a genuine love of the best literature and a real joy in teaching it should attempt a work fraught with influence so far-reaching.

What, then, does this selected teacher do, and what does she not do?

First, she asks herself, "What am I trying to accomplish? Am I teaching this poem or this drama that they may be familiar with these particular classics? Do I give for study certain priceless gems of thought that these thoughts may take up their abode in the minds intrusted to me? Is it a desirable thing that these boys and girls shall have the ability to quote freely from the best writers?" Yes, all these things are worthy

and are to be sought by the way, but they are not the ultimate thing.

It seems to me that the thing we are seeking above all is something for the future — a blessing for this child when he shall have become a man — and so our aim, ever and always, must be to lead very carefully and very tactfully to the love of reading what is best in both poetry and prose in later life. Whatever tends to diminish the chance of that happy state, no matter how expedient now, must be rejected; whatever tends to increase it, however trifling it may seem, or however taxing of our strength it may be, must be welcomed.

For this reason it would seem that the compulsory home reading of a certain number of books during the school year, now a law in our high schools, is contrary to the best principles in education. The pupils will read the six books, but the psychological effect may not be what we desire; indeed it may mean complete defeat of our purpose, which is to make readers.

Let us place in every school a library of attractive books; let us read bits of them, just enough to prove appetizing, and then let the books tempt, as they assuredly will.

Command and ultimatum are more apt to breed rebels than lovers, and it is book-lovers we are trying to make.

If we agree, then, that our object is to cultivate in the children a love for good books, — for good poetry, if you will, — what must we do and what must we be careful not to do?

I think one of the greatest influences tending to draw the child away from the enjoyment and the love of good poetry is the arbitrary fixing of certain lines or poems by the teacher to be memorized as a task. For most of us, memorizing is work pure and simple, and the moment poetry becomes work it loses its charm. This memorizing, which I would by no means omit, should be an unconscious mental process on the child's part until there has been awakened in him a genuine and enduring appreciation of poetry. When the adolescent has a well-developed taste for good poetry, we may without hazard ask him to undertake a task in connection with his literature study.

Let us avoid vivisection in poetry. If to give the meaning one must tear the poem unduly, let the meaning wait. The beauty, the music, will be enough. By and by, some

day — it may perhaps be years from now — the meaning will flash upon him and he will be richer than if you had by painful process tried to give it to him before he was ready.

Life and experience teach us many things, and it is a keen intellectual joy — this sudden flash of understanding that comes in connection with a long-remembered but dimly perceived quotation from the Bible or from Shakespeare. It has the delight and romance of a discovery, which in truth it is. One of my mother's best gifts to her children was the apt and constant quoting of Shakespeare and the great poets. The words pleased the ear and unconsciously became our own, but their purport was a mystery to the childish understanding. And now as the meaning of life unfolds, these immortal words of wisdom are made clear by knowledge gained through experience. Such a legacy is never spent, but is continually increasing in value.

I have spoken of some of the things we must not do in the teaching of poetry. What are the things that we *should* do?

Let us begin with the very little child. Before he can read, he can hear. Then let him hear! Let him hear *Mother Goose* over and

over — he revels in the delight of it. The rhythm, the nonsense, the frolic intoxicate him. Don't make him learn it, that is to say, don't let him suspect for a moment that you intend his learning it. If you do, he will become suspicious of all your future movements in this line. Just say it with him over and over as if these things were the breath of your nostrils and marrow of your bones! Then, one happy day, he will make the discovery that, unaided, he can repeat the words himself. Let him enjoy this little miracle, and let him rejoice that he is now become the proprietor of something very delightful.

When he is in possession of a good deal of *Mother Goose*, give him a taste of Edward Lear. He is bewitched by *The Owl and the Pussy Cat* and takes a warm interest in the daring elopement of this audacious pair. And then there is the story in rhyme of the unhappy attachment of Mr. Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.

> On the Coast of Coromandel
> Where the early pumpkins blow,
> In the middle of the woods
> Lived the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.
> Two old chairs, and half a candle,
> One old jug without a handle, —

These were all his worldly goods:
In the middle of the woods,
These were all the worldly goods
Of the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo,
Of the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.

Once, among the Bong-trees walking,
Where the early pumpkins blow,
To a little heap of stones
Came the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.
There he heard a Lady talking,
To some milk-white hens of Dorking, —
"'T is the Lady Jingly Jones!
On that little heap of stones
Sits the Lady Jingly Jones!"
Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo,
Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.

"Lady Jingly! Lady Jingly!
Sitting where the pumpkins blow,
Will you come and be my wife?"
Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.
"I am tired of living singly, —
On this coast so wild and shingly, —
I 'm a-weary of my life;
If you 'll come and be my wife,
Quite serene would be my life!"
Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo,
Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.

"On this coast of Coromandel
Shrimps and watercresses grow,
Prawns are plentiful and cheap,"
Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.
"You shall have my chairs and candle,
And my jug without a handle!

Gaze upon the rolling deep
(Fish is plentiful and cheap)
As the sea my love is deep!"
Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo,
Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.

Ten of these delicious stanzas! I knew a little boy who demanded this entire poem every day, and I think I feel much as that little boy did. He was especially fond of the stanza:

"Though you've such a tiny body,
And your head so large doth grow, —
Though your hat may blow away,
Mr. Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo!
Though you 're such a Hoddy Doddy,
Yet I wish that I could modi-
fy the words I needs must say!
Will you please to go away?
That is all I have to say,
Mr. Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo,
Mr. Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo."

To children all this nonsense is undiluted joy, but to men and women it is a plain necessity. Many a nervous break-down might be averted if in the sufferer's mind were stored a sufficient quantity of these jingles. Imagine the effect, if, in a period of high tension, one could repeat:

King and Queen of the Pelicans we;
No other birds so grand we see!

None but we have feet like fins!
With lovely, leathery throats and chins!
Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!
We think no Birds so happy as we!
Plumpskin, Ploshskin, Pelican jill!
We think so then, and we thought so still!

What balm is in that happy chorus! Can you not feel the taut nerves relax as you chant its musical alliteration? And what healing grace is in Mr. and Mrs. Spikky Sparrow!

On a little piece of wood
Mr. Spikky Sparrow stood:
Mrs. Sparrow sate close by,
A-making of an insect pie
For her little children five,
In the nest and all alive;
Singing with a cheerful smile,
To amuse them all the while,
"Twikky wikky wikky wee,
Wicky bikky twickky tee,
Spikky bikky bee!"

Mrs. Spikky Sparrow said,
"Spikky, darling! in my head
Many thoughts of trouble come,
Like to flies upon a plum.
All last night, among the trees,
I heard you cough, I heard you sneeze;
And thought I, 'It 's come to that
Because he does not wear a hat!'
Chippy wippy sikky tee,
Bikky wikky tikky mee,
Spikky chippy wee!

"Not that you are growing old;
But the nights are growing cold.
No one stays out all night long
Without a hat: I 'm sure it 's wrong!"
Mr. Spikky said, "How kind,
Dear, you are, to speak your mind!
All your life I wish you luck!
You are, you are, a lovely duck!
Witchy witchy witchy wee,
Twitchy witchy witchy bee,
Tikky tikky tee!"

It is a curious fact that the moment the birds and animals begin to take themselves seriously, we begin to take ourselves less so, and at times this is a very wholesome condition.

The ability to repeat from memory at least three of Edward Lear's best nonsense poems should be a requisite for every young man and woman upon entering the serious business of life; and now, when they are young, and the memory is at its best, is the time to inscribe these verses upon the tablet of their minds.

When your pupils have quaffed a generous draught of Edward Lear (they will never have had enough), there is Eugene Field, preëminently lover of children, with his tender, humorous verses; there is Riley, human and sweet always; there is Stevenson, who actu-

ally became a child for us and sang so understandingly the mysterious thoughts and feelings of little folks that it is hard to believe that he ever grew up. There is a great deal of Tennyson and Scott and Shakespeare that is glorious reading for children, with its bright imagery and music. But I fear this last observation will rank me with the testy little dogmatist in Holmes's poem:

> Thou mindest me of gentlefolks, —
> Old gentlefolks are they, —
> Thou say'st an undisputed thing
> In such a solemn way.

And yet, although nobody disputes the value of these poets for children, and although uncounted editions of their books have been specially arranged for little ones, really how much of it all finds its way into the classroom? How many little folks are privileged to caress these attractive volumes and to hear the poems read appreciatively by the teacher? I believe it is the exception when poetry is seriously and systematically considered in the lower grades.

When the child can read with some degree of ease, there is nothing that pleases him quite so much as to place in his hands a good collection of verse. There are many

such — too many; but there is nothing better than *The Listening Child*, by Lucy Thacher, and *The Land of Song* by Katharine H. Shute.

Let this time be one of unadulterated joy. Read with him and lend the beauty of your voice and the intelligence of your interpretation. This will make the poem a vastly different thing from that which it would be if he tried to read it himself.

In the lower classes the children are wildly happy when they are allowed to browse among the pages of *The Land of Song*. In fact these books disappear frequently, the delight in them often proving too much for frail human nature. They turn the pages affectionately, and the collector has a hard time of it. This is so because children naturally love poetry as they love flowers and blue skies and all beautiful things. What we have to be careful about is not to bungle and, with our artificial methods, hurt or perhaps destroy this natural taste.

The committing of poetry through all these early days should be done in the only natural way, that is, unconsciously. Is not that the way we assimilate most beautiful things? Our appreciation of what is lovely in form

and color comes slowly. It cannot be hurried. And when we try to hurry it we are artificial; we are not following nature's behest.

If you desire the memorizing of certain lines, read them to the children and, above all, let them enjoy their beauty and spirit with no suspicion of a task to mar the enjoyment. Then chat of them together, comfortably, calling attention to what is choice or fine. Here it is a good plan to ask them to read any bit that especially appeals to them. You will often be surprised at their instinctive good taste.

This selecting of beautiful or strong lines they enjoy greatly, for our own opinion is immensely valuable to us all, and this searching after the beautiful helps to make them discriminating. But let us not fall into the error of asking them *why* they like this or that verse.

I visited a young and able teacher who asked her class to repeat for me a certain poem recently enjoyed and learned. I waited a moment to ask them to read any lines that they particularly liked. There was much enthusiasm; everybody wanted to read something. Of course this does not prove that they all like poetry, but merely that they like

to talk, in common with the rest of the world. So some read one thing and some read another, and all went merry as a marriage bell until the teacher demanded why they liked their particular choice; "for," said she, "we must always know why we like things."

Complete paralysis followed. She coaxed them, but met a silence profound. Finally, for we teachers take defeat hard, she told them why they liked it, and of course she did not give the right reason, for hers was a strained and ethical one, while it was the rhythm and the sadness which, I am sure, appealed to them and nothing else; for children, like the rest of us, are stirred by the sorrowful in poetry. But alas! Why do we forget to be just simply human? Does any one know why he likes a poem or a picture or a friend?

You remember the old rhyme:

I do not love you, Dr. Fell;
The reason why I cannot tell,
But this alone I know full well,
I do not love you, Dr. Fell.

Je ne vous aime pas, Hylas;
Je n'en saurois dire la cause,
Je sais seulement une chose;
C'est que je ne vous aime pas.

And if we needed more proof, Browning has treated this idea quite seriously:

> Now, who shall arbitrate?
> Ten men love what I hate,
> Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
> Ten who in ears and eyes
> Match me; we all surmise,
> They, this thing, and I that;
> Whom shall my soul believe?

Can we not, therefore, respect the right even of very little people to say, "Je sais seulement une chose"?

Of course sometimes we may think we know why we like a bit of verse; we may think it is because it is beautiful, or stirring, or perfect in rhythm; and yet it might have all these qualities and still not possess that something that wins us. Poems, like people, have charm, and it is this quality that "gets us," so to speak. It is a mysterious something that cannot be defined, and if children feel it, it is a glorious thing; let us not spoil their innocent rapture by inquisition. "Canst thou bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades?" And just what is the sweet influence? Who that has watched this unspeakably beautiful constellation can tell the feelings it stirs within him, or who can say why these particular stars

in their charming juxtaposition affect him so deeply when all stars do not?

Edmund Gosse in his volume entitled *Is Verse in Danger?* says, "The schoolmaster is the only friend the poet of the future dares to look to, for he alone has the power to destroy the loveliness and mystery which are the charm of the old poets." It is unfortunate that such words as these should have any foundation of truth.

But we have wandered from the point, which was the memorizing of verse. Let the children look for different things in the poem; for instance, can you find any lines that create for us a pretty picture? Will you read any lines that are particularly musical? Can you discover any words that sound pleasant to your ear? Are there any lines or stanzas that you would like to have stay with you always? And so on. All of this is stimulating and developing and immensely pleasurable to the child. Unconsciously, in reading these lines to you, he is making them his own.

Then different children may read the poem with different ends in view. One may read to bring out the rhythm, one to give more clearly the thought, another to improve on

the last reader's enunciation, and still another, to improve the voice.

By means of this innocent guile, you are really leading the child to the possession of the poem, for you will find before this that together they will be able to repeat it without the books. I saw Browning's "Pied Piper" taken in this way, and in an almost incredibly short time the girls in an eighth grade could repeat the entire poem; they were so delighted with the story and so taken by the poet's clever telling of it, that to read it was a delight and to commit it in this pleasant way no task, but fun pure and simple. With shorter and finer poems, the inspiration is greater, for the music and beauty sweep them onward.

The teacher who is sincerely fond of fine poetry will find, if she follows humane methods in the teaching of literature, that her pupils will associate what is pleasant and delightful with the literature hour and will look forward to this time each day.

It will at times be very hard to live up to our "credo." It is so easy to be the pedagogue, so hard sometimes to be the stimulating presence. But if we realize the tremendous importance of keeping this literature hour al-

ways in the realm of art, that realization will help us to rise above the temptation of pedantry.

The reward will come when least expected. It may be only the lighting up of an eye, or a happy smile of appreciation when some beautiful thought travels from the printed page to the soul of the reader; it may be a request for some newly beloved book, or, as happened in one of the classes here this year, it may be a surreptitious kiss of good-by to *David Copperfield* when the books were collected after the last chapter had been read. Better than any compensation the city can give are these sweet unconscious returns the pupils are constantly giving us.

Or your reward may come years afterward, when one of the little folks, now maturely grown, tells you that you made her enjoy good poetry; that she still reads it and loves it. To influence a human life in this way, to add to the pleasures of maturity and to raise its ideals, what could be a sweeter task or bring more profound satisfaction?

In his lectures to Japanese students, Lafcadio Hearn revealed the beauty of English poetry to the Oriental mind. He did something more — he opened the eyes of a large

number of English-speaking people to the beauty of their own poets. In an incomparably simple way he shows us the glories of Wordsworth and Tennyson, and we wonder how we could have been so blind. In some such way that is what we teachers of literature should do for those who come to us. Of course we have not Hearn's genius nor his charm of speech, but the beauty and truth we see in poetry we can, in some measure, reveal to the young and open minds and hearts. Only we must be warm and human. We must lay aside in this happy hour the hammer and the anvil.

Does all this seem to make the serious study of English literature too soft and easy, too much a matter of pure entertainment for the sluggish student? If this is the impression given, I have failed completely to express my meaning. I believe religiously in the benefits of hard work. Every pupil should be taught to get from the printed page all that he, by his utmost intellectual effort, can get. He must learn to dig deep for the gold, and sweat in the digging. But his labors in this field should be accompanied with interest and love; he should delight in his work as the artist does in his.

It is worth while sometimes to spend a whole lesson period on two or three lines of poetry, where the poet's thought is obscured or where the language contains deeply hidden beauty and truth. But this thought and this truth and beauty must be worth the search, and the seekers must have a certain amount of eagerness in the quest.

Of course we all have to do things we find irksome, and it is the best discipline in the world for us. Work done through obedience or from a sense of duty is the healing physician of every life; and yet, notwithstanding, this disciplinary work is a dangerous one to introduce in connection with literature during the early years, when our only aim is to cultivate a taste for reading. When the boy or girl begins to feel the true worth and nature of literature, we may set him at hard tasks with real benefit.

For example, in an eighth grade this year, I required the memorizing of 196 lines from *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice;* but this was done during the last three months of the year, when the interest in these two plays was so apparent and so unmistakable that I did not fear injuring it by hard work. I should not have dared, however, to require

this sort of thing earlier in the year, and in the seventh grade I have not yet reached the point (and it is June) where I would ask the children to memorize one line by themselves. I do not feel that their interest is as yet an established thing. With that other group, Shakespeare was solid, so to speak, and no amount of work could make him suffer in their estimation. As one of them said, in speaking of his greatness, "Nobody has yet been able to overcome William Shakespeare."

Some of the most valuable accomplishments in the teaching of literature have been omitted in this chapter. The study of a poem offers unparalleled opportunities for the making of judgments: estimates of the characters — criticism of their weakness and admiration of their strength; judgments of their actions; and judgments of the worth of the poem itself. No other study in the curriculum can compare with the study of literature in its power to raise the moral standards, to furnish to youth noble ideals, and to refine and uplift thought, feeling, and utterance. Of these things and many more, Professor Fairchild of the University of Missouri has written most illuminatingly in his little book, *The Teaching of Poetry in the High*

School. In that very helpful volume he says:

> Of the qualifications essential to the successful teacher of poetry, the books on pedagogy contain reasonably satisfactory statements. It might here be emphasized, however, that for the teaching of poetry the primary qualification is a special talent which no artificial means can supply. That talent cannot be described, yet we know it when we find it. The secret of it seems to be imagination. . . . He thinks of the subject taught as a means as rare as it is pleasurable of stimulating, broadening, and uplifting a relatively undeveloped personality. He knows that to bring the minds of his pupils under the influence of beauty is to bring them more effectively than by any other means possible, under the reign of law. Though he deliberately aims at arousing and cultivating feeling, he is free from sentimentalism, because he insists that feeling shall always be connected with worthy ideas. He has a religion and is moral-minded, but he has n't a drop of missionary blood in his veins. He is the artist-teacher.

To be the artist-teacher! That is what we should all like to be. And nothing in the school life gives finer opportunities for the realizing of that dream than the teaching of literature.

THE APPRECIATION OF PROSE

A blessed companion is a book — a book that fitly chosen is a life-long friend.

— *Douglas Jerrold.*

The crowning achievement of science will come with the consummation of its last and greatest miracle, when it will discover some means whereby we may look through the visible and see what is now invisible; some unseen force which will enable us to pierce the tangible and know the intangible. It has already accomplished the impossible, for to-day we hear the unhearable. Perhaps to-morrow we shall see the unseeable, paradoxical though it sound. Then we shall be able to look straight into the human spirit and see there the truth that none of us is quite able to express with the means we have at hand.

Such a power may prove embarrassing for us at times, but it will be a real blessing in the classroom. The doubts and misgivings of the pedagogue will often be dispelled, and the

little tragedies of childhood and youth will be greatly diminished. Lorenzo drops over this common thought the mantle of poetry:

> Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
> There 's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls,
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Of course we have to remember that Lorenzo was in love and was, moreover, in an Italian garden on a dreamy summer night; such a combination, we are told, works for universal benevolence in the heart of man, so that we might perhaps question this harmony of which he speaks. But even the most cynical will admit that a great deal of the beauty and nobility of the human soul is never visible to our careless sight. If we really could pierce this "muddy vesture of decay" and hear the harmony within, what a world of misunderstanding would be spared us all!

Such an invention would have a very special bearing on all literature work in the schoolroom. The teacher, hearing her young class in reading, would no longer need to bore

herself and the little innocents before her, while one of them gives a painful account of what he has been reading; for, with this new instrument, unknown to the child, she will see underneath the smooth, pretty forehead and behold, perhaps, a very creditable conception of the matter in hand, — a much better understanding than the halting little tongue can possibly give. The high-school teacher will no longer need to do certain devastating things in order to find out what her class has been up to since her last assignment. She will look over each pupil's cerebral outfit, and see in the twinkling of an eye who has read with profit and who has failed to comprehend and appreciate the best.

Such a glimpse into the *inside* of the head will shed a great light on our work. We shall cease from some of our intellectual cruelties and spend our time on things that count.

Let us illustrate: a teacher assigns thirty-five or forty pages, we will say, of *Lorna Doone* for home reading. The next day she wishes to know who has carried out her directions and who has not. Thereupon, she institutes a search, a sort of intellectual holdup, and she dictates to the unhappy wretches before her, three or four questions. These

questions are often founded on very minor things in the story, — details perhaps that the unwary student, reading for enjoyment, might miss, or at least would probably not retain in the mind afterwards. If the student cannot answer all or any of these questions, he has failed proportionately in that particular reading. He may have read understandingly and profitably, but, nevertheless, by this test, he has failed in part or on the whole.

I have seen bright girls, real book-lovers, whose home reading became a kind of mild torture because of the dread of this daily inquisition. As they read, the interest in the story, the thoughtful consideration of the characters, the beauty of the language were engulfed in a wave of apprehension as to what the teacher might catch them with on the next day. How much kinder and how much more intelligent if that teacher had given them the questions *before* the reading instead of *after*. In so doing, she would have given *help* and *light*, but by this other method, she debased her literature lesson to a kind of cat-and-mouse game.

For those who resort to such measures, let us pray for some such mechanical device as was described on the previous page, for such

teaching is mechanical and honors the letter rather than the spirit. The other type of teacher, though her mistakes are unnumbered, will not make this one. She knows that

> Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good.

She believes that to open up this great world of good books to the souls in her keeping is to give them spiritual and intellectual life; and if Wordsworth is indeed right in calling books a world, both pure and good, then she certainly has a magnificent opportunity to help these boys and girls to *be* pure and good. Moreover, she is so sincere in her desire to lead these young people to a lasting love of good books that she will not knowingly jeopardize that love. Large matters are what concern her and determine her conduct with her class, and though she will often fall short (for who can measure up to such a work?), still, she will never descend to the petty and inquisitorial.

The teaching of prose in our elementary schools and all through the senior high has need of little *examination* on the part of the teacher, but it has need of a great deal of *illumination* and sympathetic help.

If the men and women of to-morrow are to be fitted to enjoy the best in books, the seeds must be sown now in the springtime of life. They must be fed on real literature, and that literature must be made interesting and delightful rather than a matter of educational discipline.

Abraham Lincoln's speeches have become classics for their strength and beauty. We cannot conceive anything nobler and at the same time simpler than his Gettysburg speech and his second inaugural address. Great-souled he was, but he possessed besides the power to move men's hearts with the consummate beauty of his language. And what was Lincoln's mental nourishment as a boy? The Bible, first of all, read and re-read; *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Weems's *Life of Washington*, and a little later, Burns and Shakespeare.

Shall we pity him for his dearth of books? He had the noblest and best, and he had them for his daily bread. He read and read, and read them yet again, until they became a corporate part of himself. The simple majesty of the Bible, the quaint beauty of *Pilgrim's Progress*, the glory of Shakespeare, were his daily companions. They were with him as he followed the plough; they kept him

company as he chopped the wood. He was extraordinarily rich. The world has called him poor, but the world sees the outside and estimates often in material things. The boy Lincoln, endowed with his intellectual gifts, living close to nature's heart, and enjoying the companionship of the best literature the world has yet seen, the Bible and Shakespeare, was immeasurably rich. To live intimately in youth with two such books is better than to be superficially acquainted with hundreds.

We cannot begin too soon to give children the great in literature. They love it for the same reason that we do, — because it has in it the things that make it live.

I remember, once in an eighth grade — a very young eighth grade — we had been reading Shakespeare during the winter, and in the first warm days of spring I gave them some of the simple poetry of Longfellow as a sort of mental relaxation. I soon became acutely conscious of a wave of dissatisfaction throughout the classroom. This was followed by an attitude of indifference which was the more remarkable because it was so unusual.

On one little girl's face, unmistakable displeasure was written, a face that, hitherto,

had been meek and humble. "What's the matter, Eva, don't you like Longfellow?" I asked, for I had my suspicions. Eva looked embarrassed to have her feelings so plainly read, and answered, "He's all right, but he is n't like Shakespeare." What literature could estimate the difference more truly or more comprehensively than that little girl of twelve? Longfellow *is* all right. No one will deny that surely, and yet, his warmest admirers must admit that he is not like Shakespeare. Thus, though children cannot analyze, they can sense differences and can instinctively recognize greatness.

From this experience I learned a lesson. I had planned badly. Longfellow after Shakespeare was like the robin after the nightingale. The gentle poet should have preceded, not followed the great one. I have never known this instinct, this intuitive recognition of what is great in literature, to fail. I do not mean that it is infallible in the individual, but in a class as a whole. There will always be some who do not "come across" as the vulgarism has it, but they are the few, the exceptions; and that is why I feel so sure that it is wise to begin with the best at the earliest possible age.

The dyspeptic is very often the man who has eaten too constantly of the unwholesome, so that finally he becomes unable to assimilate the sustaining foods. We want to avoid making mental dyspeptics. If the child has read the great and good throughout his early years, the trashy will find no welcome with him; his mind will demand the best and will be satisfied with nothing short of it. In one of our daily papers, which enjoys a wide circulation, there is running a serial called "Chickie." Here are some extracts from it:

> O did n't he get red, though? Gee!
>
> Chickie, he's crazy about you.
>
> A laugh came bubbling to his lips.
>
> She put the receiver in a dream upon the hook. Pulses throbbed all about her throat and in her heart.
>
> Chickie dwelt in a flame of expectance, waiting the moment when his eyes delved into hers, to hear him say: "Chickie, I love you."
>
> Her hair blew across his cheek. He brushed it gently aside; put his grinning face next to hers, "Say, Chickie, you're all blown to pieces. Say, Chickie, your eyes are shining like anything. Gosh, but you have swell eyes!"

> She looked into Arthur's young, tanned face so alive now with its running color. She thought him so handsome it melted her just to look at him.

Surely we have not done what we should for boys and girls, if that sort of thing satisfies them in their first maturity. If we have really led them through their reading, to think on whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, then the drivel published in many of our daily papers will merely repel, and much of the current fiction will fail to entertain because of its hopeless mediocrity. What boy or girl who has enjoyed the pages of Dickens, or Scott, or Irving, or Charles Lamb, which one of them could ever descend to the slough of thought and word which is quoted above?

We who have so much of the later right use of leisure of the individual in our hands must not fail now; we must see to it that our children know the flavor of the fine things in books, and we must make sure that these books are allowed to make their own conquest of heart and brain. We must not interfere with our petty meddling. We may help in manifold ways toward the apprecia-

tion of the book: by leading them to envisage the characters and scenes, as, with their meager imagination and scant experience they are not able to do alone; by drawing attention to the beauty of the language; by promoting discussion on the different people in the book; by encouraging the boys and girls to weigh their actions and to render a verdict on their strength or weakness; and best of all, and most fruitful of all, by reading aloud a part of the daily chapter, clearing up many a difficulty in understanding, by our larger intelligence.

Do you know the pleasure of having some one who is a better reader than yourself take a difficult passage of literature and by voice and emphasis dispel the mists? Such is the service you do for your class in reading aloud to them. Milton's prayer to the Heavenly Muse may be in the heart of the child:

> What in me is dark
> Illumine.

And to a great extent we have it in our power to answer that prayer. The English teacher should be a kind of torch, lighting up the dark places; a high priestess of the great things men have written, and a zealot for keeping them before the children.

There are many books written especially for children and, with a few notable exceptions, such are an abomination. A child must not be talked down to from a height; it is unnatural and he hates it. The books children like best, and from which they derive the most profit, are those written by the man of genius for his peers, not those given by the mediocre to what he deems his inferiors.

The really fine children's books are beloved by men and women as well. *Pinocchio*, for instance, the Italian classic for children, is a delight to the grown-up, and I am sure that Collodi wrote it because he *had* to, because that rascally little marionette was demanding to be put on paper. Such books, like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Little What's-His-Name* by Daudet, were not written by solemn-faced adults for the uplift of their younger brethren. A book written deliberately to teach children a lesson is doomed from the start. I have never yet read *Heidi* with a class without being as profoundly moved and delighted as they are; and if I tried a commonplace book with them afterwards they were frankly bored. This happened last year, and when I dropped

the mediocre and placed Hawthorne's *Wonder Book* in their hands, with its charming stories of Midas and Pandora and Philemon and Baucis, life was once more restored.

In the town of Argos there lived a maiden named Io. She was so fair and good that all who knew her loved her, and said that there was no one like her in the whole world. When Jupiter, in his home in the clouds, heard of her, he came down to Argos to see her. She pleased him so much, and was so kind and wise, that he came back the next day and the next and the next; and by and by he stayed in Argos all the time so that he might be near her. She did not know who he was, but thought that he was a prince from some far-off land; for he came in the guise of a young man, and did not look like the great king of earth and sky that he was.

But Juno, the queen who lived with Jupiter and shared his throne in the midst of the clouds, did not love Io at all. When she heard why Jupiter stayed from home so long, she made up her mind to do the fair girl all the harm that she could; and one day she went down to Argos to try what could be done.

The Paradise of Children

Long, long ago, when this old world was in its tender infancy, there was a child, named Epimetheus, who never had either father or mother; and, that he might not be lonely, an-

other child, fatherless and motherless like himself, was sent from a far country to live with him and be his playfellow and helpmate. Her name was Pandora.

The first thing that Pandora saw, when she entered the cottage where Epimetheus dwelt, was a great box. And almost the first question which she put to him, after crossing the threshold, was this, —

"Epimetheus, what have you in that box?"

"My dear little Pandora," answered Epimetheus, "that is a secret, and you must be kind enough not to ask any questions about it. The box was left here to be kept safely, and I do not myself know what it contains."

"But who gave it to you?" asked Pandora. "And where did it come from?"

"That is a secret, too," replied Epimetheus.

"How provoking!" exclaimed Pandora, pouting her lip. "I wish the great ugly box were out of the way!"

"Oh come, don't think of it any more!" cried Epimetheus. "Let us run out of doors, and have some nice play with the other children."

It is thousands of years since Epimetheus and Pandora were alive; and the world, nowadays, is a very different sort of thing from what it was in their time. Then, everybody was a child. They needed no fathers and mothers to take care of the children; because there was no danger nor trouble of any kind, and no clothes to be mended, and there was always plenty to

eat and drink. Whenever a child wanted his dinner, he found it growing on a tree; and if he looked at a tree in the morning, he could see the expanding blossoms of that night's supper; or, at eventide, he saw the tender bud of tomorrow's breakfast. It was a very pleasant life indeed. No labor to be done, no tasks to be studied; nothing but sports and dances, and sweet voices of children talking, or caroling like birds, or gushing out in merry laughter, throughout the livelong day.

— *Nathaniel Hawthorne.*

Here are two selections taken at random from two books, both re-telling some of the old myths, but in vastly different ways. The one is prosy, tiresome, without magnetism; the other is lively and fanciful, full of color and charm. Is it surprising that children feel this difference and prefer the prose of Hawthorne to that in some of the school readers? Any of us would rather look at a Rubens or a Reynolds than at a home-made chromo, no matter how good the intentions of its maker might be.

The namby-pamby has no place in the classroom at any time; we have too many grand old stories that have been bequeathed to us by the centuries; the stories of Achilles and of Hector, of Hercules and of Ulysses.

> Read Homer once, and you can read no more;
> For all books else appear so mean, so poor,
> Verse will seem prose; but still persist to read,
> And Homer will be all the books you need.

The truly great in literature holds something for all; for the child as well as for the sage, just as the masterpiece in art charms the ignorant and the connoisseur.

Lytton says, "In science, read, by preference the newest works; in literature, the oldest. The classics are always modern." But the classics must be allowed the dignity and room they require.

On a previous page I spoke of interfering with the author in his conquest of the reader. I alluded to the pernicious obsession of the pedagogue which deems an examination of every reading necessary; the habit of giving, after home reading or silent reading, questions involving mere memory of detail. This is, first of all, a violation of the Golden Rule, for none of us would care to submit to it ourselves. It is arbitrary in the extreme, for what two people, reading the printed page, will remember precisely the same things? The impressions and thoughts taken away from any reading vary with the intelligence, the experience in life and with the tempera-

ment. So that the only fitting question after a long chapter has been read is a broad one and it should seldom be answered in writing.

No boy or girl should constantly associate the idea of written tests, which all youth fears and abhors, with a beautiful work in literature which we hope to make him love and treasure. The two ideas are diametrically opposed. Of course questions involving memory of detail and of events may often be asked if only to reveal to them how much they miss, how carelessly it is possible for us all to read; they should be asked, however, not as a test, but as a step in the lesson.

What we can do every day and what every class delights to do, is to talk over the chapter, enjoying together in reminiscence the pleasurable parts; and enjoying, too, the differences of opinion, as we would talk about these things with our friends over the coffee and dessert. These young people are delighted to tell you what they think of Murdstone and Betsy Trotwood and Quilp and Scrooge. How they do enjoy it! As much as we do, gossiping about our acquaintances and estimating their worth.

It is the province of human nature to judge other human nature, and what a field for

reason and judgment and just dealing this discussion offers! Was David's mother right in permitting Murdstone to assume all management of her son? Do you think she suffered from Murdstone's cruelty to David? Then why did she allow him so much authority? Was Peggotty or Mrs. Copperfield the stronger character? Why? If you were selecting a wife would you choose Dora? Are there any Doras today? Was Steerforth a good son? Why not? Was his mother a wise mother? What are the attributes of an ideal mother? Of a good son or daughter? Does the Bible give us any picture of a good wife and mother? (Here is a golden opportunity to read "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies," and all the rest of that simple, beautiful exposition in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs.) What does the Bible say of a good son? (A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.) And so on, ad infinitum.

The field for this kind of thing is unbounded. Everybody will want to talk at once and this is precisely the attitude you want, especially as they will all have something to say.

A good story does more to teach morality and to impress righteousness on the mind than any amount of talk or preachment; here they are dealing with living people for whom they feel an affection. That these people are not forgotten, but live on in the minds of the young reader, we are constantly having proof. You will find below, extracts from some papers written by girls who read *David Copperfield* more than a year ago, and who recently saw a filmed version of the book. Without any preliminary talk or suggestions, I asked for a frank opinion on the pictures as they impressed them. I find that much of the story which I had forgotten was remembered with touching fidelity by these young enthusiasts.

I missed the part where Dora takes account of her housekeeping and the kind of food she gave David. Uriah Heep should have been more untidy and he should have the appearance of one who makes people feel creepy.

I liked the pictures, but it seems to me that Uriah Heep was not so 'umble as he was in the book.

I don't think that David brought in Jip to place him at Dora's side. I think that the dog motioned to David that he wanted to see Dora, but that David refused and so Jip died of sorrow

when he heard that his mistress had died. I also wanted to see that rascal Steerforth, and poor little Emily. I was very much disappointed when they didn't appear, although that part of the story is very sad. I wanted, too, to see Mr. Barkis and Peggotty when they were married.

There's one thing I didn't like very much, and that was when David's dear wife Dora dies and it immediately was shown David making love with Agnes right off. Anybody who didn't read the book would n't have known that David waited three years before he married Agnes. David was really blind when he married Dora, for Agnes's love was greater. However, the picture as a whole was worth while and I would n't have missed it for anything.

They left out most of the part that Peggotty was in, for instance, when she marries Mr. Barkis and when David goes to live with them. They did not show how, when Barkis was sick, he had all his money in an old box under his bed, and how he told David that he kept his old clothes in it. They left out the part that I wanted to see most where Peggotty takes David on a trip to her brother's house.

I liked the picture very much but I loved the book far more than the pictures. When I was walking up to see the pictures I kept thinking how much I would enjoy seeing Emily and the sea and Mr. Peggotty, but when I came out I was very much disappointed.

I think Murdstone was not as bitter as he might have been.

They did n't give the school scene, and about Ham and Peggotty and Emily. I was longing to see that.

I think Peggotty was too slender.

The person that represented Peggotty was not fat enough. I think it would have been interesting if they had shown David at school.

They should not have shown that funny picture after David Copperfield. It seemed to ruin the picture before. (A very wise criticism for such a young head. Immediately on the conclusion of David Copperfield, they put on a film entitled "The Picnic.")

Micawber was nice. I always thought he was like that when I read the book.

I think Miss Murdstone should have been more sour-faced and haughty.

Uriah Heep was n't as 'umble as I thought him to be.

Dora was loving and childish, but when she died, David was n't supposed to be in her room. He should have been downstairs near the fireplace with the dog.

Most of the characters acted lovely. Peggotty did not look as the book described her.

One thing that I did not like was the quick changing of years in the picture, without

having any incidents happen to lead up to them.

When I read the book I thought that Dora's dog died downstairs and instead the pictures gave it as happening upstairs and I think that I shall have to read it over again to find out.

Peggotty did n't look as I thought she looked. I imagined that she was a fat, motherly lady with laughing wrinkles about her eyes. Still, although she did not look like Peggotty, she acted like her.

Peggotty was not well chosen, for I think she should be much stouter than in the picture and her face should be more unbecoming.

With much more in the same strain.

There is no doubt of the clear and lasting impression which Charles Dickens has left in their memory. They went, as you and I go, to see a beloved book dramatized, and had the same experience that we have, namely, that a fine book always loses in the process.

But the stickler for discipline will exclaim, "All this is very entertaining and pleasant, but what about my assignments? How can I be sure, if I don't test them every day, that they have really read what they were told to read." Well, of course, you cannot know. But when we think of all the other things we

don't know, this extra one does n't make much difference. It is really rather useless luggage, a good deal of the knowledge of our pupils that we teachers insist on carrying about with us.

Suppose, then, instead of *testing* and *examining*, we invite some one to tell us the thing that stands out in his mind above everything else in the chapter. He may perhaps be disappointing in his answer. Perhaps the really big thing escaped him. Well, he is young yet, and intelligent reading is an art, an accomplishment that none of us has wholly mastered. We cannot expect too much at first; besides, he is self-conscious and as yet his tongue cannot perfectly coördinate with his thought. The next time his attempt will be better, and if he is invited to talk often enough, embarrassment, which is the father of many classroom ailments, will vanish, and his easy, smooth statements will surprise you in June.

Or, suppose we ask another to give briefly the main events in the chapter as he recalls them. And if, in doing so, he omits important things, — what then? Shall we hold in one hand a pencil and in the other that instrument of torture, that paralyzer of spon-

taneity, the marking-sheet? Shall we estimate his struggles by letter, A–B–C–D or E? Or shall we hold up a lamp for him that he may see a little more clearly, and shall we not, with a smile, supplement and amend his pitiful attempt, so that the book takes on a new meaning for him?

This may sound like educational pampering, as if literature were not a serious study, but merely entertainment. In truth it is far from that. There is a time to be extremely hard on the shirk, the indolent, or lazy mind that is making no effort to get the meat and digest it for himself; but in the main, the attitude of the teacher in the reading-class, whether of prose or poetry or the drama, whether in the primary school or in college, should be the attitude of the wooer; the atmosphere should be sunny and warm, with as little of the clouds of disapproval and the chill of cold inquirv as possible.

In a long experience of teaching and of witnessing much fine teaching, I have never seen this attitude fail to arouse a class. In a space of three or four months, an eighth grade, if it be of average ability, can read *David Copperfield*. It is an exceedingly long story, if judged by pages and chapters, yet

they are always sorry when it is finished. To read it in this space of time means reading many, many chapters at home. Very few omit this and, if they do, what then? You can drive your educational horse to the fountain, but you cannot always make him drink its delectable waters. He must be thirsty to do that, and it is our business to make him thirsty; if we try and fail, we must occasionally submit to the inevitable even in the schoolroom.

The class in general enjoys the book and sends up such lamentations at the idea of giving it up that it is frequently left with them for a while, that they may read again the specially beloved chapters. Is not any boy or girl better for having met and known such people as David and Peggotty and Traddles and Ham and Agnes? Are they not a little more strongly armed against temptations with such ideals of integrity and honor and purity as these personify evermore in their minds? Is not the aim of all aims to lead him to love this book? So that he will say to himself, "Dickens gave me *David Copperfield* and he has left many more which I am heir to; I will arise and go to the library and claim my inheritance."

Or is our purpose merely to enable these young people to cover certain points which may be required in an examination to enter college? Carlyle says, "The true university of these days is a collection of books," and I would rather a boy or girl should be admitted to this life-long university and fail at the other, unless indeed, he might enjoy the blessings of both. But the times are moving on and with them is coming breadth of vision in these academic matters. In the morning paper appeared the following: "History was written at Harvard yesterday when the first examination in which students were allowed to bring textbooks into the class room was held in the new lecture hall. The course was English 72, which deals with the poetry of the Nineteenth Century, or the romance movement in England. It was given by Professor John Livingston Lowes, who started the movement to allow the use of books during the examination period. Some students pronounced it a success and a few favored the old plan.

"The purpose of allowing the students to bring books to the examination-room was not to make the examination a test of a twenty-four-hour memory, but to give pupils a chance

to show critical ability, to show that they knew where to look for information and how to apply it. The books could be used freely."

There is nothing to prevent our trying that method with younger children. The ordinary test involves memory more than any other faculty of the mind; yet this is not the highest function of the intellect. A test that calls forth reasoning and judgment, discrimination and understanding, is a test of a higher type, and such a test might be given with perfect freedom to use books. Indeed, the power to use books rightly is in itself an indication of superior intelligence. Professor Warren, in his *Elements of Human Psychology*, says, "There are certain facts that every educated man ought to know. How far to insist on such knowledge is a serious problem. Teachers are inclined to attach undue importance to this kind of memory. Encyclopedias and reference books are generally available, and it seems useless to burden the child's memory unnecessarily. He should of course be taught the addition and multiplication tables, weights and measures, and other fundamental statistical matters. But in the higher education it seems more important to teach the student *where to look for information*."

If there is any point in all that I have been trying to say, it is that the supreme thing is, first, to give pupils the best books, and second, so to conduct all our reading of these books that they may become a vital thing in their lives. How infinitely rich is the man who numbers among his intimates Mr. Pickwick, Jean Valjean, Tom Brown, Romola, Maggie Tulliver, Dr. Lavendar, Adam Bede, Colonel Newcome, Rebecca, and that host of true and mighty spirits that are ours for the asking! How happy he who has laughed over Don Quixote and Tom Sawyer and Sam Weller and Micawber and that troop of merry souls that will gladden the heart of man for ages yet to come!

No boy and no girl can read the best prose and not be better for it. We cannot live in daily contact with people better than ourselves and not absorb a little of their nobility. "I am not the rose, but I have lived near the rose" is a very pretty way of putting this thought. And none of us who takes the profound truths of a good book to heart can ever be precisely the same afterwards. The earlier we begin to form these impressions, the more lasting do they become.

Let us then give the children noble ideals

in the attractive human form and with the fascinating setting that is found in the great books. We may begin with the classics among the fairy tales and the fine old folk-stories. We must beware, however, of keeping them too long on the sweets of the fairy tales. They have yet to learn a nobler code than that in the fairy stories, where virtue is always triumphant over wrong and where goodness is always rewarded by achieving the heart's desire. Wholly false ideas are established by these tales if devoured inordinately. They do serve to develop the imagination, and they do delight the very young, but children, more especially girls, may become demoralizingly fond of them, and may build up an ethical structure as false as stairs of sand by an overdose of this type of reading.

Truer and more beautiful are the stories told by Hawthorne with matchless skill in the *Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*, and the Homeric stories with their universal truths wrapped about with the mantle of beauty. There is no false teaching in the *Wanderings of Ulysses*. Here, pain and combat and spiritual conflict are shown to be the daily portion of the good and brave. These are books in which the "primal duties shine aloft

like stars"; books that teach, not that the payment by an unseen power for righteousness is happiness ever after, but that Duty is the "stern daughter of the voice of God" and that consecration to the right and to one's duty are their own reward, bringing not necessarily happiness and the fulfillment of our desires, but something better and more permanent, — spiritual courage and spiritual peace. The Homeric stories emphasize this truth.

When we give these stories, however, let us make sure that they are not too much diluted, leaving their beauty in the hands of the translator. Their interpreter should be himself a man of genius, and such a one we have in Charles Lamb who has told the *Adventures of Ulysses* and invested the fine old stories with some of his own peculiar charm.

> Then Ulysses, suspecting some foul witchcraft, snatched his sword and his bow, and commanded Eurylochus instantly to lead him to the place. But Eurylochus fell down, and embracing his knees, besought him by the name of a man whom the gods had in their protection, not to expose his safety, and the safety of them all, to certain destruction.
>
> "Do thou then stay, Eurylochus;" answered

Ulysses; "eat thou and drink in the ship in safety, while I go alone upon this adventure: necessity, from whose law is no appeal, compels me."

So saying, he quitted the ship and went on shore, accompanied by none; none had the hardihood to offer to partake that perilous adventure with him, so much they dreaded the enchantments of the witch. Singly he pursued his journey till he came to the shining gates which stood before her mansion; but when he essayed to put his foot over her threshold, he was suddenly stopped by the apparition of a young man, bearing a golden rod in his hand, who was the god Mercury. He held Ulysses by the wrist, to stay his entrance; and "Whither wouldst thou go," he said, "O thou most erring of the sons of men? knowest thou not that this is the house of great Circe, where she keeps thy friends in a loathsome sty, changed from the fair forms of men into the detestable and ugly shapes of swine? Art thou prepared to share their fate, from which nothing can ransom thee?"

But neither his words nor his coming from heaven could stop the daring foot of Ulysses, whom compassion for the misfortune of his friends had rendered careless of danger: which when the god perceived, he had pity to see valor so misplaced, and gave him the flower of the herb moly, which is sovereign against enchantments. The moly is a small unsightly root, its virtues but little known and in low

estimation; the dull shepherd treads on it every day with his clouted shoes; but it bears a small white flower, which is medicinal against charms, blights, mildews, and damps. "Take this in thy hand," said Mercury, "and with it boldly enter her gates; and when she shall strike thee with her rod, thinking to change thee, as she changed thy friends, boldly rush in upon her with thy sword, and extort from her the dreadful oath of the gods, that she will use no enchantments against thee; then force her to restore thy abused companions." He gave Ulysses the little white flower, and instructing him how to use it, vanished.

Here is the same indefinable charm that we feel in Hawthorne and in any master's workmanship. The children are as quick to respond to this mysterious power as we are, and we are not fair to them if we give them the second-rate.

Young people should have abundant reading in the Old Testament and, happily, we have an excellent little book edited by Professor Nettleton of Yale University, *Old Testament Narratives*. I used this with a class of pupils of mentality under average, and it held and interested them. Of course one need not follow slavishly the order of chapters, but may select here and there those

stories that have an appeal for the particular group which is to read. *The Wooing of Rebekah*, the stories of Ruth and Esther and the Queen of Sheba, are favorites of the girls, while David and Goliath, Jacob and Esau, David and Saul, though having an appeal to all, are especially enjoyed by the boys. William Lyon Phelps says of *The Wooing of Rebekah*, "This first courtship is told with much interesting detail, and is a true pastoral, unequalled in idyllic beauty until we come to the story of Ruth."

> And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming.
>
> And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.
>
> For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.

Of the story of Jacob and Rebekah uniting to deceive Isaac and Esau, Phelps says, "Regarded from an artistic point of view it is one of the finest short stories of literature."

In this same book, *Human Nature in the Bible*, he goes on to say, "No child brought up on the Bible — as all children should be —

ever forgets the happy moment when the waters 'asswaged' "; and "in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen." This is quoted for the part between the dashes.

> And Abraham was old and well stricken in age and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his servant, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh; and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." And the servant said unto him, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land; must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?"

Where shall we find English that for simplicity and grandeur can rival the Bible? Yet it is rarely read by the children.

Unfortunately, Nettleton has stopped with the narratives. We need also to bring to the children the best of the Psalms and Proverbs.

> The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.
>
> Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? or who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.

> In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
>
> Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
>
> And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

But this does not belong with prose; it is poetry, pure and simple. Here is guidance for all the vicissitudes of life. Could anything surpass it for strength and wisdom and beauty? And how little the children who are not brought up in religious homes ever hear! Nothing approaches it in prose; only the poetry of Shakespeare comes near. Some day some one will compile a book of the beautiful, wise sayings in the Bible, — sayings that have no appeal to the sectarian, and no offence to the zealot, but which are of such universal application that they may be taken to heart by the Jew or the Christian or the Mohammedan. Such a book, used a few moments every day in the schoolroom, will be an in-

estimable force in the moral life and on the thought of the child.

At this same period, when the Homeric stories and the Bible may be introduced, children enjoy Kingsley's *Water Babies*, that breezy, tender story written by a loving father for his little son, without preaching, but full of smiles and tears; soon they will be ready for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland;* for Alcott's *Little Women;* for the old Greek myths, those peerless stories of Orpheus and Eurydice, of Narcissus, of Niobe and her grief, of Perseus, of Ceres and Proserpine. All these stories have in them the element of sadness which children, strangely enough, seem to love. Yet, perhaps it is not so strange, for sadness plays a large part throughout life; the undertone of sadness is in our happiest moment and this the children perhaps unconsciously recognize.

Soon they will be able to appreciate Dickens: the tender pathos of Little Nell, which to us seems overdone, but never to them; the comedy of Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness; and after the *Old Curiosity Shop*, *David Copperfield*, the adolescent's favorite. Then, a simple edition of *Les Misérables* which we

have in Wiltse's Jean Valjean. Now we may introduce them to the majestic prose in *The Great Stone Face;* the charming humor and finished style of *Rip Van Winkle;* the pleasing stories of Jewett and Phelps; the delicate sparkles of wit from Aldrich; the dear, homely atmosphere of *The Cricket on the Hearth;* the captivating and thrilling ghost story, *The Christmas Carol,* which one writer has called "the greatest little book in the world"; some of the great novels of George Eliot like *Silas Marner, Adam Bede,* and *The Mill on the Floss; Lorna Doone* and Helen Hunt Jackson's masterpiece, *Ramona.* But why try to enumerate? Our riches are so vast, our inheritance so great, that an inventory is impossible.

Not for one moment should we think these things above the heads of youth. Youth is aspiring and idealistic. If it has its illusions, it has also its enthusiasms, and I think its illusions, so called, come nearer the truth than the disillusionments of later years. All these writers belong, happily, to the idealists. The good are good, the bad are bad, and goodness is right and badness is wrong; there is no subtlety, no shadow on the sunlight; no wretched realism with its weak, stupid people

trying to depress us and convince us that life is a dull business filled with iniquity.

Shakespeare and Scott and Dickens give us noble men and true women, and the literature teacher owes them an eternal debt of gratitude.

We were reading in *The Great Stone Face*, and when the lesson was over, one lifted up her voice in praise. "It is just like poetry," she said delightedly, and as though making a discovery. She knew this prose was different from the prose in the newspapers, the magazines, and indeed from most prose one reads. She felt its majestic rhythm, she rejoiced in its superb language, and she said these things in her way, for in likening it to poetry she paid it the highest compliment that prose as such may receive.

In that same class was another. I had asked them to compare the two stories, *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Great Stone Face*. Now I admit that it was a foolish question, for they are incomparable, but I wanted to have a little peep inside their heads, and this girl's answer did reveal to me her state of mind: "*The Great Stone Face* compared to *Rip Van Winkle* is this: *The Great Stone Face* was a story of how a stone was

a face, but *Rip Van Winkle* is a story which you would enjoy reading it." Could more be said in few words? I think that girl was a master of forceful English. Notice the potent *but* and what it conveys. "*But Rip Van Winkle* is a story which you would enjoy reading." Observe the tense, also. *The Great Stone Face was* a story but *Rip Van Winkle is*. In other words, as far as Eda is concerned, *The Great Stone Face* is dead and decently buried, but *Rip Van Winkle* still lives. How a stone was a face did not interest her rather shallow understanding; she got the letter only; all the spiritual significance or most of it escaped her. On the other hand, although bored by Hawthorne's lofty heights, she enjoyed Irving, who, you must admit, is not to be sneezed at; and I am sure that after a little more time spent in that cultivated gentleman's society, she would not be guilty of such a breach of good English as "which you would enjoy reading it".

As one thinks it over, Eda's criticism is not so bad after all, for as a story of real people *The Great Stone Face* is not a complete success. Ernest is not quite human, while Rip and his wife are enchantingly so. Even Wolf, the dog, is human. I think that Eda,

after the manner of children, actually chose the best from many points of view. Therefore I retract my reference to her shallowness, which was really the result of some little difficulties Eda and I had to adjust together, but which shall not be divulged here.

Think of the refining influence, the toning down of their ideas of what constitutes humor, which must result from reading Irving and Aldrich. The newspapers do their utmost on the so-called comic sheets to blunt and coarsen this sense of humor, and the movies take up the work where the comic sheet stops and carry on valiantly in the same spirit. Against this cheapness and vulgarity, Irving and Aldrich are but feebly heard at first; the wit is so delicate as to be scarcely noticed, but as the teacher explains the little jests (yes, a jest is better understood even with explanations than not understood at all) and tells them to be on the look-out for more, and encourages them to laugh at each one, their sense of humor begins to undergo a change. They become aware that there is another world of light, elusive jest and playful fancy, as different from the comic sheet and the pie-throwing as the gambols of a lamb are different from those of an elephant. I think that to

elevate a boy's sense of humor is to elevate his character, for the buffoon is unkind in his laughter and cruel in his jest. So I would give him generously of choice humor, for our friendships are often promoted by the things we laugh at in common, and the man who laughs when he should is generally serious when he should be serious.

The worth of nonsense is not generally understood. The man that seeks the funny page or the jokes at the end of the magazine, before reading the *sense*, does so rather slyly and as if ashamed. Yet he is following a very natural and worthy instinct. The fault lies in the kind of nonsense the paper offers him. The world of nature has its nonsense in the dancing sunbeams, the little cataract, the playful stream, the prankish wind, the elfin and fantastic frost. The kitten chasing the falling leaves, and the bear cubs playing, are nonsense, but what charming nonsense! The babe, smiling winsomely at his dimpled hands, and marvelling at the wonder of his toes, — sheer nonsense, but is it not better than sense? If we analyze, we shall find that all through life the normal human being delights in what we, with our civilization, call nonsense, but which is in reality something

fundamental and necessary and delightful; and only as we allow civilization with its artificial desires and attainments to crowd out the natural, do we become too *sensible* to enjoy nonsense. Holbrook Jackson, an English essayist, has written whimsically on this subject.

> I do not think it is good for anyone to be always sensible. Not that anyone is always sensible — on the contrary; but most of us think we are. It is from this illusion that we require a holiday, in fact, several holidays, and, were I an autocrat, I should make such holidays periodical, like the festivals of the Church; for, as Sir Thomas Browne says, "Many things are true in Divinity, which are neither inducible by reason, nor confirmable by sense." Doubtless I shall be alone in this amiable wish, since we live in a practical and businesslike age, and have little time to cut capers. Material success is our aim, and nonsense has nothing whatever to do with that aim. Nonsense is shy of success, even of its own; and I believe this shyness is due to certain delicate and even fairylike qualities which are apt to become soiled in the market-place — as what thing does not?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> But stranger still, the deliberate creators of nonsense for the sake of nonsense have turned to that noble work from what was acknowledged

by their contemporaries to have been sound and sensible work; but in spite of all offers of financial reward, and other temptations, they became masters of nonsense, and their whimsical ideas and images have given delight not only to past generations but to the present, and there is every sign that they will continue to give delight to many and perhaps all generations to come; for nonsense rarely dies. Let us take but three examples of this type of genius: Lewis Carroll, Hans Andersen, and Edward Lear. The first of these was the creator of that classic nonsense, *Alice in Wonderland*, and yet how strange it is to think that Alice was a mere incident — an accident really — in a life which might easily have lost itself in a morass of theology and mathematics. Doubtless, he took himself more seriously as the Rev. C. L. Dodgson, mathematician and theologian, than as Lewis Carroll, creator of Alice; but who shall say that he did not touch infinity in the latter capacity? His mathematics, upon which he prided himself, will be forgotten (even Euclid is becoming *passé*); his theology, which, doubtless, was much to him, will be dead; but Jabberwocky, the Mad Hatter, the Duchess, the Mock Turtle, and all their jolly fellows, will prance merrily down the ages, cutting happy capers for happy children and happier adults until the crack o' doom.

Just as Lewis Carroll took himself seriously as a mathematician, so Hans Andersen took

himself seriously as a novelist. But the spirit of Eternity judges neither one nor the other by such standards; Eternity has touched neither their mathematics nor their novels with his magic wand. That wand has waved and descended gently upon Alice; and it has waved with like immortal results over *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Tinder Box*, and *The Wild Swans*.

But the most remarkable of all nonsense-artists is Edward Lear; if the rest are masters of nonsense, he is surely our Prince of Nonsense. He has raised nonsense, nonsense pure and simple, nonsense free of all sense, morals, and prettiness, to the heights of great art. His work is the very apotheosis of nonsense; he is "the prophet of the utterly absurd, of the patently impossible and vain."

His world was peopled with men and animals that never were on sea or land; strange lights flared in his dreams, showing us a realm of prank here in the very heart of our rational day. He has given us the keys of the heaven of nonsense, and as we turn them in the doors and enter therein we breathe lightly and without care of the morrow, as though we were one with a rout of children dancing and shouting:

> Sally go round the moon!
> Sally go round the sun!
> Sally go round the chimney-pot
> On a Sunday afternoon.

Man is an irrational creature, and the essence of the human comedy is concerned with his at-

> tempts to be otherwise. Doubtless the comedy will continue — there will be no last act. So I do not look to nonsense as one looks to some reforming or revolutionary power. It is not that. Indeed, I am not so sure that I would alter the human comedy; I might wish it more varied — but on the whole it is good enough until we are more conscious of its purpose. Nonsense has nothing to do with progress; it is as unchanging as it is uncertain, as young as it is old. Its value lies in its futility. But by showing us the absurdity of things, nonsense may help to keep us usefully sane; by checking ultimate consistency it may help to keep us alive.

The young reader as well as the old should include in his reading some of this heaven-born nonsense that he may gratify the divine desire to smile that is in all of us. That desire is shown in the infant laughing at the veriest trifles, and in the aged man smiling at his own infirmity.

And now, to gather up our loose ends and to sum up in a brief way, what shall be our line of conduct in the teaching of prose?

Let us begin at the earliest possible age, the reading of the great, — the books that time has not killed because they have in them that which time *cannot* kill, — immortality.

Let us keep on all through the school years

with the best, that fine ideals may be born and nurtured; that truth and honor and purity be reverenced; that the profound and universal truths of life which are of necessity in the classics may be taken seriously to heart.

Let us fully realize that young people have insight into and appreciation of what is noble in prose as well as in poetry, and let us in no way interfere with the enjoyment of it.

Let us sprinkle generously our reading with the things that make them smile, for the power of the smile is immeasurable.

> Even children followed with endearing wile,
> And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.

Let us recognize the worth of delicate humor, sparkling wit, and pure nonsense.

And, finally, let us keep all this reading outside the domain of hard labor, the strait-jacket and the lock-step. Let us make it a time of unmixed delight, a time when the student feels he is enjoying a very special privilege, as in truth he is.

And further to inspire and help him in his life after he leaves school, I would ask a gift to every boy and girl from the city treasury: an attractively bound book, containing, in clear and large type, the titles, arranged in

the order of the intellectual demands they make on the reader, of all the best books in the world.

What happens to the young people who leave us? In the hurry and press of work and of pleasure, our suggestions of what is good to read are naturally buried in oblivion. They often want a good book, but don't know how to go about getting one; they are too self-conscious to ask the librarian what is good reading, and so they take their reading as they would scorn to take their food, haphazard and as chance offers.

This book, therefore, strongly bound, to endure the ravages of time, would be a guide during their lifetime, or at least until they are old enough and wise enough to make their own guide-book. I should like to see such a book presented with ceremony at the close of the school days, whether the close came in their fifteenth year or their twentieth; and I should like to see it handed to the student as a very precious legacy from the past and an Open Sesame for future joys.

DO YOUNG PEOPLE ENJOY SHAKESPEARE?

> There Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
> The crowns o' the world; oh, eyes sublime
> With tears and laughter for all time!
>
> — *Browning.*

BEFORE considering the question of the child and Shakespeare, one may do well to think a little about the grown-up and his attitude toward the great poet.

What is the reason for the general public apathy toward Shakespeare — whether it be a matter of seeing his plays on the stage or of reading them by the fireside? Is it the fault of Shakespeare himself, or is it merely the depravity of man in general? Is Shakespeare two or three centuries ahead of this generation, as he was of his own, or are his plays really less entertaining than the musical comedies which noisily and continuously flourish? Does the average man or the average woman (those concepts commonly referred to, but never actually encountered) get

more relaxation and fun from the movies than from *As You Like It*, or *Twelfth Night*, or *The Merry Wives of Windsor*? Or is Shakespeare merely for the highbrow and the scholar?

These are questions one asks, but which one may not so easily answer. Certain it is that Shakespeare is not now known to the common theatre-going public as he was known to them when he wrote for them, and I do not believe the reason to be that he is altogether above their heads. Intelligence is a more or less general attribute and is found quite as much in the so-called lower classes, the commons, as in the upper strata of society.

A multiplicity of causes is responsible for the fact that the greatest dramas ever written in any tongue are, comparatively speaking, unknown to the great mass of American people. In the first place, when Shakespeare is given, the prices compare so unfavorably with those of the poor man's theatre — the moving-picture house — that from the economic standpoint — a very important one — it is handicapped from the start. Then, a Shakespeare engagement is so limited, usually two weeks in length, that by the time some of us are aroused from our lethargy it is too

late to secure tickets. These companies visiting us with Shakespearean dramas do not make it easy for our young people to attend. There is no special price for them and no special performances. The young people of to-day are the audiences of to-morrow, and nothing is done, not the smallest effort made, to educate that future audience for the best. It is true that the language of Shakespeare is often difficult for the uneducated man, and the thought profound, but the action of the play very often makes plain what, if merely read, might prove too much for the untrained understanding; so that I do not believe this to be a determining factor. I think that if the municipality would undertake to build and maintain a Shakespeare theatre, as it has maintained so many other activities for the cultural benefit of its citizens, and if it would engage the services of a good stock company, and if moderate prices insured to the patron a good drama well done, we should witness a revival of the interest in Shakespeare such as was felt a generation ago when Edwin Booth and Modjeska and Salvini and Irving and Ellen Terry and Ada Rehan made his great plays the delight and the inspiration of the common man. In those days there were

actors to give Shakespeare and there was never any dearth of audience. Shakespeare was known as he should be known — on the stage. People *saw* Hamlet and Lear and Falstaff, and with the aids of art and of personality they became real and living. A municipal theatre, properly conducted, with good actors, would be not only a great educator, a source of cultivation and inspiration to many who need it, but it would be besides a joy, a blessed recreation to a great throng of people who want fun and laughter, — yes, and tears, — but who cannot get these things at the sort of amusement commonly offered in our playhouses.

But, of course, this is all a dream, and what we must meet is reality.

The very best way to create lovers of Shakespeare is to begin in childhood. Holmes, in the *Autocrat*, in naming the conditions for the making of the gentleman says, "Above all things, as a child, he should have tumbled about in a library. All men are afraid of books who have not handled them from infancy. Do you suppose our dear didascalos (referring to James Russell Lowell) over there, ever read *Poli Synopsis*, or consulted *Castelli Lexicon*, while he was growing up to their stature? Not he; but virtue passed

through the hem of their parchment and leather garments whenever he touched them, as the precious drugs sweated through the bat's handle in the Arabian story."

In the same manner, if a child hears Shakespeare quoted and talked about in the family, if he knows Macbeth and Rosalind and Viola and Shylock as personages discussed at the family board, he cannot help absorbing slowly and naturally what we may term a Shakespearean atmosphere. When we were children, though poor in the things that the world appraises, we were rich in some things that the world forgets or disdains to appraise, and one was that we heard the plays of Shakespeare and the actors who were presenting them at that period talked about so commonly that the more familiar speeches became household words to us. My mother, who was a great lover of Shakespeare, was no educator, fortunately, and she was not consciously trying to educate us — not a whit of it, — she left that to the schools; she was merely talking of things of absorbing interest to her, and as little pitchers have the proverbial ears, much of the talk was understood, a great deal of it enjoyed, and the commonly referred-to lines retained in the memory.

The child that learns to enjoy Shakespeare in this simple, natural way is thrice blessed. If my mother had set us to reading the plays and studying the notes after the fashion of the schoolmaster, we should, with the perversity natural to children, have hated them. Instead, of our own choice, we sought the plays, and if we did not understand them, we smelled the leather, and as Holmes declares, some virtue passed through that to us. It was at least a step toward the later reading with its better understanding.

But what of the thousands of children who never hear the name of Shakespeare in the home? How shall we proceed with them? Can the teacher take the parents' place and quite simply and naturally bring about that happy result, — a Shakespearean frame of mind?

Of course that depends upon the teacher. If she herself feels as Milton did toward the great Master's work:

> What needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones
> The labor of an age in pilèd stones?
> Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid
> Under a star-pointing pyramid?
> Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
> What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
> Thou in our wonder and astonishment
> Hast built thyself a livelong monument.

For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavoring art,
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then, thou, our fancy of itself bereaving
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving,
And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

If the teacher feels, though unable to give it voice, this reverence which Milton has so nobly expressed, and if she allows herself to be thoroughly human, I think she will find such a work not only possible, but delightful. Only she must remember that the less academic she is, the better for her class. Shakespeare was a great man, an unparalleled creator of characters, but he was not a scholar; he dealt with human beings, and it is well for the teacher often to remind herself of that, and to deal with *her* human beings in a human way.

Sometimes one is tempted to wish that no school edition of Shakespeare should be permitted to contain notes, for too many teachers make a fetish of the notes, and the study of Shakespeare degenerates into an elementary and wholly useless study of etymology and philology. Why should boys and girls memorize isolated Elizabethan English words which

they will never use and never encounter except in these plays? The notes, used merely as an aid to understanding, to add to the enjoyment of the play, are a real blessing, but too often they are made a study by themselves, and this becomes so deadly to the student that he begins to associate Shakespeare with this uninteresting, uninspiring grind, and dislikes him from the start.

Many estimable people, people of intelligence and refinement, feel to-day an aversion for the plays of Shakespeare because deep in their consciousness is the memory of the agony and labor that attended their reading of his plays in the schoolroom; the strange, queer words that must be studied and conned by rote; the miserable attempts to explain those words to the teacher; the learned allusions that were called for — and alas! if one was found wanting! All the recollection seems to be one of gasping and floundering in a dreadful sea of perplexities.

Now all this is sad business. These good men and women have understanding and feeling, and they would have rejoiced in Shakespeare had he himself been really presented to them; but he was so masked as to be unrecognizable; he was degraded into a petty and

altogether profitless study of words — obsolete Elizabethan words. Teachers who so misuse their high office, either through an exaggerated devotion to things scholastic or through limited vision, should not be permitted the glorious privilege of teaching Shakespeare. In another department of English, that which deals with words and their functions, this type of mind will do excellent and valuable work, but it does not belong in the domain of literature.

I have not seen the class, no matter what else failed to interest them, that could not be roused into something like animation and appreciation by one of Shakespeare's plays. During the present term one of the teachers has in English an exceedingly low eighth grade averaging in age from twelve to fifteen years. A good many of those girls are actually below average intelligence and, for the first time, *David Copperfield* was relinquished for a simpler book. Yet that class is at present *enjoying Julius Caesar*. And this is no miracle! It is rather what we should expect. Here is a great human drama filled with great human passion — real men and real women feeling love and jealousy, admiration and envy. Some are noble and to be loved; some are

ignoble and to be pitied; some are wicked and to be despised, but all are human.

Why should not young people like such a play? The story of human life in dramatic form is fascinating to us all. The movies are nothing else but this, and they draw their millions. *Hamlet*, if pictured, would make most films by comparison seem tame. It would be the greatest melodrama ever put on the screen, with its murder, its ghost, its suicide and insanity. What saves it from being melodrama, and what makes it a great and stirring tragedy, is its profound philosophy and its poetic diction. Is this philosophy and this beautiful language too much for the common people? I think not, for the children with whom I have had the joy of reading Shakespeare are the daughters of mechanics, of laborers, of peddlers, and of store-keepers. Few have what we are accustomed to term background, although we really mean by that term a certain particular background. They have their background and, in many instances, it would prove a very rich and interesting background if we could know it; but of the background which in our limited way we understand by the term they have almost none. Many do not even own

a book. The next generation, we hope, will own and love many, but now, they are many of them bookless. Now if Shakespeare can be appreciated by children of this class, I think we may safely generalize concerning any class and all classes.

Before beginning the reading of Shakespeare, that is before seriously studying one of his plays, it is wise to do a little acclimatizing. Shakespeare's English is different from ours, with a blessed difference. His fancies are delicate and unusual. His imagination takes us far journeys. All this the young child or youth of twelve or thirteen is not quite ready for unless we prepare him. This can be done to some degree, first by teaching him some of the simple songs of Shakespeare, such as:

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me
And tune his merry note
  Unto the sweet bird's throat —
Come hither, come hither, come hither,
  Here shall he see
  No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

Orpheus with his lute made trees
And the mountain tops that freeze
Bow themselves when he did sing:
To his music, plants and flowers
Ever sprung; as sun and showers

There had made a lasting spring,
Everything that heard him play,
Even the billows of the sea,
Hung their heads, and then lay by.
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or, hearing, die.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen
Because thou art not seen
Although thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot.
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not.

Where the bee sucks, there suck I;
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry;
On the bat's back I do fly,
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough!

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;

And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green;

The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
These be rubies, fairy favors —
In those freckles live their savors.
I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

Then some of the lovely gems from his plays — like "The quality of mercy is not strained", etc. I have found very young children delight in learning:

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls;
Who steals my purse, steals trash; 't is something, nothing;
'T was mine, 't is his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

The children understand a great deal more of this sort of thing than we are apt to realize. A little story of something which happened years ago, when a niece was visiting us, may illustrate. She was just six years old and she had learned, purely through mimicry, Portia's entire speech to Bassanio, beginning:

You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand
Such as I am; though for myself alone,

> I would not be ambitious in my wish,
> To wish myself much better; yet, for you,
> I would be trebled twenty times myself;
> A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
> More rich;

and continuing to that generous ending:

> This house, these servants, and this same myself,
> Are yours, my lord; I give them with this ring.

A sister was at that time studying at the high school and had read the speech aloud many times in the presence of the listening infant who was not only able to repeat Portia's long speech, but to give Bassanio's reply as well:

> Madam, you have bereft me of all words;
> Only my blood speaks to you in my veins.

We would frequently ask her to lisp the lines, and we thought it a huge joke that she could repeat so many words of whose purport she was completely ignorant. Some days afterward, she asked one of her aunts if she might take her jewel-case to bedeck her small person. The aunt, thinking it unwise to encourage a somewhat pronounced love of gewgaws, refused, and the little one sweetly accepted; whereupon the aunt relented and said, "What would you say, dear, if I should let you have my jewelry to play with?" Instantly the answer came, "I 'd say:

Madam, you have bereft me of all words;
Only my blood speaks to you in my veins."

Now, if we had questioned the little innocent as to what Shakespeare's words meant, I am sure she would have been dumb; but she was able to use them and use them well, showing a perfect understanding.

Therefore, in work of this kind we cannot be too searching. Not all that goes on in the mysterious realms of thought is convertible into language, and we must take much on trust.

The second step in this adjustment to the Shakespeare atmosphere may well be the reading of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. These give much pleasure, and a seventh grade is a very good one in which to allow Lamb to make his début. Here are Shakespeare's stories charmingly told by a master of good English, and with a good deal of the Shakespeare phraseology still clinging to them.

If the teacher in composition desires merely a story for telling, where can she find better ones than *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew?* This last is perfect; it has all the elements needed, — an obstacle to be overcome and a highly picturesque personality succeeding in overcom-

ing it; — a beautiful, high-spirited young woman transformed finally to a dove-like wife whose submission is as whole-souled as her rebellion was. The delicious humor, the mischievous Petruchio, the wilful Kate — all appeal to their love of romance.

If you are teaching composition and are discouraged by the depressing papers you nightly yawn through, try having them write this story. That kindly dispensation of a merciful Providence, the mixture of nonsense with sense that a few of our pupils may always be counted upon to give us, comes to the English teacher to cheer and hearten her. I had read the story of *The Taming of the Shrew* to the class and they were "reproducing" it as we call it — but whether it was really reproducing the story and spirit of Charles Lamb you yourself may judge.

> There was once a woman whose name was Katherine. She was always scolding so they gave her a name Cape Shrew. One day Petruchio came in and said to her, "Miss Shrew, I am going to marry you Sunday." Miss Shrew answered, "Sunday, I wish I shall see you hanged." One day Petruchio went in Cape Shrew's house and said to her, "Look how the moon shines" and Katherine said, "That is n't the moon, it is the sun." Petruchio got mad

and said, "I say it is the moon." Katherine said "all right." What Petruchio would say so Katherine would say "Yes, it is right."

Even more diverting is this weird piece of imagination:

THE TAPERING SHREW

There was once a beautiful woman whose name is Katherine. She lived in a little cottage nearby a beautiful river. She has a husband whose name is Petrochio. Katherine is a very stout woman. And her husband is a friendless boy, and he works on a faraway Ohio farm. He knew not how his object was to be accomplished, for he never fettered by details. Katherine scolded the people and they dislike her. Her husband was brave and he only knew that he would be a artist. That settled it.

Celia, you see, refused to be Anglicized. She is American to the core. This is probably the most thoroughly American version of Shakespeare ever written.

But these, of course, are the exceptions. These little people, as a whole, get a very good idea of the fascinating stories, and it is much better to let them have the book in their own hands. Then they will not wander to Ohio farms — and improvise hasty marriages between stout women and friendless

boys. For pure enjoyment of reading, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and many others will furnish good material.

After Lamb's Tales have made their appeal, and Shakespeare has become something more than a name, the third step in this acclimatizing process is to give bountifully of the famous and oft-quoted lines from Shakespeare's plays. There are hundreds and hundreds of these quotations, for next to the Bible, Shakespeare's wisdom has become household words with us; a wisdom to fit us to meet almost every exigency of life — a wit to describe almost any situation. A very few of the multitude of beautiful selections are given.

> Tell me where is fancy bred,
> Or in the heart or in the head?
> How begot, how nourishèd?
> Reply, reply.

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.

He is well paid that is well satisfied.

> Cowards die many times before their deaths;
> The valiant never taste of death but once.

Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more.

Mend your speech a little lest it may mar your fortunes.

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

I must be cruel only to be kind.

If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work.

Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, — an excellent thing in woman.

O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven.

He hath a tear for pity, and a hand
Open as day for melting charity.

Oh it is excellent
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.

Everyone can master a grief but he that has it.

The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore, is winged Cupid painted blind.

Good-night, good-night! parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say good-night till it be morrow.

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind!

A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience.

Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind;
The thief doth fear each bush and officer.

How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching.

A merry heart goes all the day
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!

Shall Caesar send a lie? Have I in conquest stretch'd
mine arm so far
To be afeard to tell gray-beards the truth?

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!

To gild refinèd gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,

To smooth the ice or add another hue
Unto the rainbow
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

Love thyself last; cherish those hearts that hate thee;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace
To silence envious tongues. Be just and fear not;
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's
Thy God's and truth's; then, if thou fall'st O Cromwell,
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr.

And for the light and jesting mood:

God made him and therefore let him pass for a man.

I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove;
I will roar you, an 't were any nightingale.

Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever, —
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

This last one gave me some qualms. Was it wise to direct their thoughts in such a channel? Might it not make them precocious and lead them to think on things which should have no place in the mind of youth? I finally concluded that it was altogether too good to

omit, and felt sure that they would not take it too seriously. They always smiled when they repeated it, — showing that they regarded it humorously. Not all, however, for later one of them, when asked to interpret any one of the quotations from Shakespeare, wrote:

> Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more, men were always false and always will be. They don't know if they will stay with their own wives or be proposed to another. Men are not always true, we must not believe them, they say that they will love us, but they will love us for a month or two. That 's a good lesson for us ladies to keep in our minds.

(This lady was thirteen.)

Perhaps this cynical attitude indicates a mistake in teaching such a quotation. I think we may take Emma, however, with a large grain of salt. She has probably had a premature glimpse of the fickleness of man, and that, not Shakespeare's good-natured satire, has soured her. But one has hopes of the maid who is thus embittered at thirteen.

Now these quotations which the children enjoy so much should not be consciously memorized. Their fondness for them might thus be endangered. But if the extracts are

placed on the blackboard or on a typewritten sheet, and talked about, illuminated by the teacher, their environment in the play (when practicable) presented, and their application made plain and simple, they greatly enjoy them, and have a real satisfaction in reading them and learning them with the teacher.

For instance, if they know that a king guilty of an atrocious crime spoke the words, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below", while attempting to pray, that quotation means something to them and they will apply it to themselves when in idle and perfunctory prayer. If they know that Ophelia returned Hamlet's gifts with these words, "Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind," because of his unkindness to her, then they take on a meaning, and by so much imagery and understanding their minds are enriched. If we can make them see Wolsey and feel his sorrow and his remorse when he speaks to Cromwell those immortal words, "Love thyself last," by so much are we adding to the meaning of the lines and to their appreciation of them. So that, whenever possible and practicable, the scene in which the pithy words were spoken, pictured to the child by the teacher, will help tremendously. After

reading them together a very few times, you will find that they can repeat them together if you give them the first two or three words. This they find great sport, for it partakes of the nature of a game. New interest is added if a child is allowed to lead the class instead of the teacher. It is amazing sometimes to see how quickly and how joyously a class takes hold of this kind of thing. It is the best proof of the greatness of Shakespeare that I know, the fact that with the mysterious human quality that is present in his poetry he can so quickly make his conquest of these ignorant, uninitiated children.

When they are fairly familiar with the lines, presuppose a certain situation and let them apply one of Shakespeare's bits of wisdom to it. For instance: You are kissing your baby brother good-night and he is particularly captivating; what Shakespearean words might you speak?

"Good-night, good-night" etc.

Or some one has done a very noble, unselfish act:

So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

A certain man constantly suspects others of being dishonest; what do you know of such a man?

Suspicion haunts the guilty mind.

What verse of Shakespeare might be spoken to a girl who wantonly speaks ill of another girl to hurt her reputation?

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their soul, etc.

What has Shakespeare said of an ungrateful son or daughter?

How sharper than a serpent's tooth, etc.

What might we say to the girl who tries to improve on nature by the use of cosmetics?

To gild refined gold, to paint the lily, etc.

What contrast does Shakespeare make between the foolish and the wise man?

The fool doth think he is wise but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.

What might you say to the friend who is giving sage counsel?

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, etc.

And so on. The path is endless. It is limited only by the teacher's own knowledge of Shakespeare, for he himself has left it boundless.

The specimens above are mere suggestions.

Such a lesson has a two-fold power: it teaches righteousness and it strengthens and elevates the power of speech itself, and both these lessons make the deeper impression because of the joy attendant. By familiarizing the boys and girls with these noble words of Shakespeare you are leading them by degrees into the atmosphere of his plays, and if they never read a play you would still be enriching their lives immeasurably. Later, when they recognize these isolated speeches in the drama, they will flash a look of pleasure to you. They enjoy meeting a familiar friend among the lines just as we do.

Lafcadio Hearn says, "In the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries Shakespeare was read and enjoyed only as schoolboys of twelve or fourteen years old now read and enjoy him — that is to say, he was read for the story only, without any suspicion of what an intellectual giant had appeared in the world."

I do not think his reference to the schoolboy is wholly true. It is true that the story plays a large part in the play with the very young reader, — often a disappointingly large part, but it does not play the whole part. It is perfectly natural that the story should be

much to them. Stories have charmed men from the beginning of time. Nevertheless, there is a great deal besides the story which the children enjoy, as I hope to show in these pages. There is a certain amount of pleasure in the beauty of the lines, and if they are simplified and illumined and read intelligently by the teacher, there is a very great deal of enjoyment in and appreciation of the wisdom, and a great deal of admiration for the characters. This increases from day to day, so that any teacher who takes the same class through two years of English sees a tremendous growth, an almost incredible development in discrimination, in appreciation, and in the more difficult and more mature power of estimation. Her class toward the close of those two years begins to be very like an inspiration to her.

And now let us talk of the reading of the plays, the actual business of study and enjoyment, for in Shakespeare as in all literature lessons, study, to render real benefits, must be synonymous with enjoyment.

The custom prevailed some years ago of beginning the reading of Shakespeare in the senior high school and toward the latter part of the course. It has been said that no man

can enjoy Shakespeare until he becomes old. Perhaps one has to be old to understand his plays perfectly, but surely there is much that we may get from them before the wisdom of old age makes its appearance.

Shakespeare's greatness lay in his universality. He wrote not for his own generation, but for all generations; not for any one class, but for all classes; not for children or for sages, but for the human race; and one needs merely to be a normal human being with a normal intelligence to find his plays, when properly presented, both pleasing and profitable. Above all, Shakespeare portrayed human beings, and the teacher who leaves outside the classroom all pedantry, all fondness for detail and for the little things, and just brings to the young people before her a lively imagination and a thoroughly human perspective, will do best with Shakespeare.

Perhaps a little bit from one of Lafcadio Hearn's lectures to the Japanese students may throw some light on the manner of studying Shakespeare.

> Will it not surprise you to think that Shakespeare was able to delight the common public during the age of Elizabeth with plays which only our own great scholars perfectly

understand today? The explanation is very simple. The audiences of that time enjoyed the plays exactly as a boy enjoys reading them now — just as very clever stories well dramatized. Questions of psychology and all that sort of thing never enter into the boy's head, — and never entered into Shakespeare's head. His art was unconscious, he never knew how wonderful his own work was; he only felt that it was true. And he was speaking not to scholars or men of science but to thousands of people who could neither read nor write.

. . . . . .

Another thing against which I think it is the duty of the lecturer to warn the student is the psychological theory — the theory of a fundamental idea in each and all of Shakespeare's plays. A great deal of rubbish, very learned rubbish, has been written upon this subject; and it has all ended in exactly nothing. Shakespeare never had a "fundamental idea"; he had no other plan in writing his plays than to make them as close to truth as possible. He never had even a theory of dramatic composition. He broke through all rules, not only because he did not care about rules, but because he had too large a mind to be confined by theory.

. . . . . .

Such advice as I now offer . . . may be summed up in these few words: the study of Shakespeare

to be profitable in a literary sense, must be study based upon imagination. I mean that the best way to study a play of Shakespeare is to try to understand perfectly, not the language, which is often a matter of very secondary importance, but the situations. All the art of Shakespeare being based upon imagination, being in itself the highest possible expression of the highest power to which the human imagination has yet attained, it is imaginatively that we should study it. To approach Shakespeare, the student ought first to get rid of the idea that he is about to study a monument of language. Certainly in his best moments the language of Shakespeare rises to a height of sublimity which that of no other poet has reached. But such moments do not represent the level of Shakespeare's ordinary work, — a work teeming with faults, faults of a hundred kinds, faults such as no Victorian poet would dare to make. The man of genius can dare to write as badly as he pleases, and Shakespeare is the best example of such license. The ordinary man, on the contrary, has to be very careful how he writes, for his imagination is weak and commonplace; having little to say, everything depends on how he says it. And so it were better that in reading Shakespeare you should begin by paying least attention to the language and most attention to the action, — or to be more explicit, the living incident of the plays. Of course there is a language-study of

Shakespeare. The texts of Shakespeare cannot be ignored in any scientific study of Elizabethan English. There is a Shakespearean grammar; there are many Shakespearean glossaries; there are many Shakespearean concordances; and there are countless commentaries and dissertations and analyses. But all this represents not so much philology as philological specialism; and unless you have made up your minds to devote twenty or twenty-five years of study to Tudor English alone, I should plainly advise you to pay no attention whatever to all this. The obligatory study of a Shakespearean play not only teaches a boy nothing about Shakespeare, but very commonly disgusts him with the subject. My own personal experience of having been obliged as a boy to study and to recite Hamlet was that I could not bear to look at the play for twenty-five years after. I had learned it by heart — parts of it; but I did not understand it at all, nor did I understand it until I reached middle age. I did not even want to understand it. The reason is that our study of Hamlet had been merely rhetorical and grammatical; we were kept to the letter of the text, nothing being done to cultivate the student's imagination, or to interest him emotionally in the incidents of the great tragedy. I am convinced that, for literary purposes, this system of teaching is entirely wrong; and for that reason I warn you against it.

If a mind so gifted, so predisposed by nature to the love of literature as was that of Lafcadio Hearn, — if such a mind may be turned away for a time from the enjoyment of reading by the methods he has described, how much more fatal are such methods when practiced on the ordinary student — the one who needs every device and every art we may bring to bear — to stir his imagination and quicken this faculty of appreciation for literature.

For the lesson in Shakespeare is primarily one in appreciation: appreciation of character, appreciation of incidents, appreciation of beautiful imagery, appreciation of nobility and of all the virtues. To stir the emotions of love and sympathy for the good and the brave; to move them to a feeling of disgust for the base and the cowardly, these things must indirectly elevate and strengthen character. The classroom may become too much a place of drill and discipline. The more their emotions are stirred, the oftener their imagination is awakened, the better for them now and the better for the world later. The education of the nobler sentiments has a very great influence on the life of a human being, and on the influence that human being will

some day exert on the world about him. In one of the morning papers, in the editorial column, appeared an article bearing upon this from the pen of H. Addington Bruce:

Sensory Education

We hear much nowadays about the importance of giving the young special training to develop their sense of sight, of hearing, of touch, etc. Prompted by the vogue of the Montessori system, professional and amateur educators seem to be vying with one another to invent ingenious methods for the education of the senses.

"The senses are the tools of the mind," they insistently affirm. "Sharpen them, and you enable the mind to function as it should. Sensory education is the great need of all children." Now, undeniably, sensory education should have a place in general education. But I would protest against the evidently growing tendency to utilize it as a substitute for general education. Sharpen the senses as we may, we shall leave the mind sadly undeveloped if we depend solely or chiefly on sensory education.

We must educate the sentiments as well as the senses. We must quicken and direct the imagination. We must make the child a humanly sympathetic, sensitively social being as well as a notably efficient one.

Else all the sensory education in the world will not save him from disaster.

He may possess sight as keen as a hawk's,

hearing as acute as a deer's, yet life will be to him sadly dissatisfying. Socially inept, mentally blind to the higher realities, unresponsive to the beauties of the world about him, uncultured as regards the arts — in short, soul-starved — his will be a wearisome existence, it may even be an existence fraught with more harm than good to mankind.

No. The value of sensory education should not be over-estimated. It serves a necessary end. But it can never serve all necessary ends, can never meet all human needs.

The soul, remember always, has its demands, its requirements, no less than the senses. Men were never intended to find full self-expression and full satisfaction merely through highly developed sensory skill. They also need expertness in the general art of living.

How sadly thousands stand in need of this even today. If sensory education has in the past been unappreciated, so also for multitudes has been the education of the sentiments. Noble ideals have not been inculcated in them in youth, wherefore in manhood and in womanhood they are paying a heavy penalty.

And the inculcating of noble ideals, the expanding of the soul, can never result from an educational system having as its great aim the intensifying of the powers of the sense organs, however ingenious the process of intensification may be."

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Although our primary object is the development of appreciation, other blessings will follow naturally. One of these is the effect that the study of Shakespeare has on the pupil's own spoken word. As his mind becomes the dwelling-place for beautiful thoughts in beautiful form, there follows a reaction on his own utterance and an elevation of thought itself.

Compare the language which the child sees on the screen with that which he meets in Shakespeare's plays. In one of our best theatres I saw one of the actors described as a "red-blooded he-man!" Now I suspect that what the perpetrator of this atrocity really means is that the actor is a man of valor, — that what we regard as the manly virtues are present in him. How does Shakespeare convey this to us? Bassanio says of Antonio:

> The best-conditioned and unwearied spirit
> In doing courtesies; and one in whom
> The ancient Roman honour more appears
> Than any man in Italy.

Antony says of Brutus:

> And the elements
> So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world "This was a man!"

and Hamlet describes the late king, his father:

> See, what a grace was seated on this brow:
> Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
> An eye like Mars to threaten and command;
> A combination and a form indeed,
> Where every god did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man.

Surely this was a red-blooded man; but so much besides! What glorious pictures and what lovely thoughts are suggested by Shakespeare's words! The language of the film appeals almost always to the senses, while that of Shakespeare is of the spirit, and he is needed a thousand times more to-day than he was before poor pictures and poorer language became an accustomed thing.

But, aside from all the benefits which unconsciously, though surely, come from the reading of Shakespeare, the lessons are, as has been said before, primarily lessons of appreciation, pure and simple.

How, then, shall we proceed to awaken and develop this appreciation of the particular play to be studied?

How does any of us learn to appreciate fine music? Is it by analytic study or from lectures *about* music? Or is it just by hearing good music over and over again? I remember

the delight as a girl when I heard Chopin's Mazurkas played frequently by a musician who was an artist as well. Though I could not play a note, and knew nothing of the technique of the player or of the composition of the master, yet to listen was a new-found joy. That is the experience of many people who have never been trained musically. It is the natural response of the soul to beauty and harmony in sound.

Something akin to this must take place in the appreciation of Shakespeare. The reader does not quite understand his enjoyment of the lines; the young reader cannot possibly tell you why he likes to repeat those sonorous words of Shylock:

> Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
> In the Rialto you have rated me
> About my moneys and my usances;
> Still have I borne it with a patient shrug;
> For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.

and the rest of that wonderful arraignment of the Christians; yet he does like it immensely and learns it gladly, such charm does it hold for him! He is stirred constantly by Shakespeare's lines without in the least knowing why, any more than I know why I like Chopin's Mazurkas. But it is our function to enlighten

him — to make the speeches the natural expressions of human beings like himself, of people who love and hate just as he does, and who fail and aspire as he does.

How can we best make this play the natural human drama it really is — to his undeveloped intellect? First of all by realizing that notes and word-study are not the play but merely an incident in the reading of the play.

These notes are often a real problem to the teacher. To begin with, they are placed in the most inconvenient part of the book to consult, — the last pages. When the pupil encounters a strange word, he must turn to the back of the book, hunt up the particular act and scene which he is reading, and then explore until he finds that particular word. What a waste of time, when all this help might have been graciously placed at the bottom of the page he is reading! In the fraction of a second he glances down, receives the coveted knowledge, returns to the text, and all with the least possible interruption to the continuity of his thought. I am sure that if the editors of Shakespeare for the young had to *teach* as well as *edit*, they would mend some of their ways.

Then the notes themselves. Too often they

are written for the scholar, for the student of language as a science. For instance:

> Advised — Where used in the same sense before?
>
> Breathing courtesy — What is the meaning of this and what similar expression did the servant use in Act II, Scene 9?
>
> Cherubins — The Hebrew plural of Cherub is cherubim or cherubin. Shakespeare adds an English plural to this form.
>
> To give — The gerund. See Act I, Scene 1.
>
> Possess'd — See Act I, Scene 3.
>
> Conceits — With what meaning has the word occurred twice before in the play?
>
> Commodity — How differently used in Act I, Scene 1.
>
> Best-conditions, and unwearied — Where in Act II, Scene 1 did we have a similar example of the condensed manner of expressing the superlative of two adjectives connected by *and?*

These are a few — taken from the notes for the young reader of the *Merchant of Venice*. This is not Shakespeare at all. It is purely technical language work, and very uninteresting language work at that. It is not only wholly out of place, it is an educational crime, to torture young people with this sort of rubbish and call it studying Shakespeare. The language has changed since

Shakespeare's time, but he is not to blame for that. What he wants to give us is people and action and thought; not plurals and gerunds and conjunctions.

Keats said:

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Something of this attitude is greatly needed in both the compiler and the teacher of Shakespeare.

There are many helpful explanations and much suggestive questioning in the school edition quoted, but the study of words is overdone in all editions for the young. The importance of this study is greatly exaggerated and serves only to interrupt the thought unnecessarily. The context itself often explains, and that is the best kind of explanation.

We who teach Shakespeare would appreciate a simple edition of his plays, each play a separate volume, but with the excellent type, the interesting illustrations, and the conveniently placed notes which are the attributes of that beautiful set of Shakespeare's plays published by Little, Brown and Company — the new Richard Grant White edition.

I do not know why children who need all the illumination possible should always have the cheap and inferior editions. The school boards will say, "We cannot afford expensive editions;" but the teacher will answer, "We cannot afford *not* to have the best." Whatever helps to make Shakespeare enjoyed and admired is not a luxury, but a necessity, if we are to study his plays at all.

And now for the manner of taking up those plays, so that they may be an inspiration and not a disciplinary task.

The best play to begin with I have found to be *Julius Caesar*. Such a choice seems strange perhaps, since it is a political story; yet the children have always shown a greater ability to get hold of this play than of some of the others with plots that seem more adapted to a child's understanding. The truth is that the lines in *Julius Caesar*, for the most part, are more comprehensible to them; there are great lines throughout the book, lines more commonly quoted perhaps than in any other play, but on the whole they are simple.

Let us say, then, that we will start with *Julius Caesar* in an eighth grade. Of course there are as many ways of taking up the play

as there are teachers. One may begin by telling the children a little bit of Roman history, or by sending them to Plutarch, or by doing nothing of the kind, but letting them find out history from the play and verify it afterward.

My own feeling is that Plutarch is vastly more interesting after Shakespeare than he is before. Shakespeare has made Brutus and Cassius and Antony to *live*, and we are naturally more interested in reading about live people whom we know than about Romans who have been dead two thousand years. Landor said, "He was more original than his originals. He breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life." If the play has been read with interest and appreciation, they will seek Plutarch, to see how near the truth historically Shakespeare came.

Of one point I am strongly convinced, and that is that any reading about Shakespeare himself, or about the writing of *Julius Caesar* at this stage in their development, will be a flat failure. They know nothing and care nothing about Shakespeare; and quite naturally too. They care even less about how he came to write the play, or when or where he got his plot, for the play being as yet an

unknown thing, it is folly to expect them to feel any interest in its history. No child cares about authors as such. I remember, long ago, I thought the children ought to know something about Whittier; so I told them that he was a Quaker, that Quakers do not believe in bearing arms, but that Whittier accomplished with his pen more than he could have done with his sword. All of which meant little to some of them because of the poverty of their experience, as I learned when I read one of the papers telling about it afterward!

> John Greenleaf Whittier was a poet. John Greenleaf Whittier lived in a simple little cottage. John Greenleaf Whittier is a fine man. There religion is a quacker. John Greenleaf Whittier did not believe in slaving. He did not fight with a saw but he helped the slaves by writing poems about them.

Having decided then upon our introduction, or whether indeed we shall have any introduction, the next step is the reading of the play itself. This reading should not be a too minute study, but should move along fairly well, and every scene should be read first by the teacher. If the pupils read (even the most intelligent), the class loses an incalculable amount in the understanding of the

characters. No girl or boy, no youth or maiden, can possibly put into the lines what a mature teacher with her experience of life and of people *should* put into them. Let a class try reading a scene themselves, and then let the teacher read it for them, and see the delight and comprehension registered on every face; now the people are real; they are alive; before they were as inert and lifeless as the reading itself.

The interpretive reading by the teacher in all literature is a great help, but in Shakespeare it is a necessity. She should be familiar with the best presentations on the stage that she may be able to describe to them the settings in any great scene, — as, for instance, the court scene in the *Merchant of Venice*. She will picture to them Shylock, his habit, his manner of carrying himself, his expression, his anger and vindictiveness when fortune seems to be playing into his hands, and his piteousness when he is vanquished; and as with Shylock, so with Portia, telling all she can of her dress, of her beauty and dignity, and of her manner; all this that in imagination they may try to conjure up the scene; then her reading will complete the picture.

To set a class at reading Shakespeare them-

selves is to lose the golden opportunity to make the play mean something to them. They should, of course, have plenty of opportunity to read, and this they will do infinitely better and with much more enjoyment after the teacher. Something of her fire, something of her spirit, will have gone into them; they can better express now by voice and intonation the hauteur of Caesar, the serenity of Brutus, the passion of Cassius, and so on.

This first reading of the play is accompanied by a reasonable amount of study of the notes as an aid. There is only one way for children to use the notes in a play of Shakespeare, and that is through their own desire. The teacher who assigns notes for home study makes a grave blunder; she who creates in the student a desire to look at the notes for help is choosing the wiser way. Let her show to the class when she is reading the play with them that she herself needs the help of the notes; let her stop at obsolete words and consult the glossary. She does not need to tell them to do the same; every mother's son of them will mimic her and search as she does. The greatest bit of encouragement I have had this year was when I discovered six girls in a very low eighth grade, themselves among the lowest

in scholarship, looking in the notes after the bell had rung for recess. We had to stop in a very exciting scene, and those six girls actually preferred to go on reading alone, consulting the notes for help, to pleasant converse with their neighbors.

Having read the play through in this manner, accompanied by suggestive questioning, it would be very pleasant and very profitable if we might begin all over and read it right through again, but the time allotted does not always permit such a course.

Now comes a special study of the characters. Of course this study of characters is bound to go on throughout the reading, but, having read the entire play, the students are better able to see them from all points of view. This character-study delights them. "What do you think of Cassius?" They agree that he is quick-tempered, shrewd, jealous, ambitious, but devotedly fond of Brutus, and they will give you the lines to prove their assertions. They will tell you that Portia, Brutus's wife, is a much finer woman than Calpurnia, Caesar's wife, for, they declare, Portia inflicted a wound on herself to make trial of her bravery, while Calpurnia shows pronounced feminine fear,

and moreover (and this seems to make a strong impression on them), she wanted to have Decius tell a lie about Caesar; here they quote the line,

Say he is sick.

Portia's desire to share all her husband's grief, that she may help and comfort him, wins them completely. They will tell you that Brutus is the real hero of the play, a true nobleman whose armor is righteousness. His weakness they do not see, and it is not necessary that they should at their age; better to keep him in mind as a hero than to analyze too minutely and part with an ideal. And so with all the people of the play. They like to give you the characteristics of each, and I am sure it is all as interesting to the teacher as to them. Buds and blossoms are always lovely, and now thought is blossoming and lends color and fragrance to the lesson.

Now we are able to take the last two steps, those of dramatization and of memorizing, these steps being taken wholly by the class, with a word of suggestion or of illumination occasionally from the teacher. First, they read the play through, alone, for the purpose of selecting what they regard as the most

interesting scene for acting. There is usually some variety of opinion, but their judgment is surprisingly good, for they generally hit on the most dramatic or the most beautiful scenes in the play. They bring their scenes to class, select their actors and read it aloud. That is the first step in their dramatization. The second is this: the class selects from the scenes presented one or two which they deem most capable of being acted by members of the class; they select, then, one who has shown herself apt in interpreting the play and make her the manager or director. She will cast the various parts, and will call rehearsals, etc. Without any help from the teacher, this group prepares a scene, and the fun they get out of it any one who has been in private theatricals will understand. When they are ready to give their performance, the class is audience and dramatic critic. They state freely and cheerfully the faults as they see them, and recommend improvements. With an intelligent class, this affords enjoyment for both pupils and teacher.

Once they gave the quarrel scene in *Julius Caesar*. Imagine, if you can, a little dumpling of a girl only four feet tall, or rather four feet short, impersonating the lean and hungry

Cassius. They knew what they were about, however, when they chose her for Cassius. A certain smoldering fire, — a nice little temper that could be served piping hot if you knew just how to order it, was the evident possession of little Jennie whom the class in general understood perfectly, and loved warmly. Jennie proved that the spirit may overcome completely all handicaps of the flesh, for by the flashing of a pair of handsome black eyes and the rightly timed stamping of a very chubby foot, and the angry intonation of a very good voice, accompanied by the manœuvring of two dimpled hands, she left no doubt in our minds that something of the spirit of Cassius was for the time being animating her small body. Brutus was calm and lofty, speaking with noble dignity; it was delightful that two little girls could so forget themselves and live in the spirit of those two Roman warriors, and it was a touching tribute to the greatness of Shakespeare. He would have smiled at their puerile attempt, but it would have been a kindly smile.

Then a group gave the scene in Caesar's house when Calpurnia begs Caesar not to go to the senate house; here again Michelina forgot that she was a plain little American,

and with the aid of some cheesecloth and Shakespeare's patrician English, she became a grand Roman lady, tenderly solicitous about her lord. Alba was no longer a poor Italian, worrying whether family funds could keep her at school another year, but the great Caesar himself, exclaiming haughtily:

> Shall Caesar send a lie?
> Have I in conquest stretch'd mine arm so far
> To be afeared to tell gray beards the truth?

They gave in an eighth-year class the scene in the *Merchant of Venice* wherein the Prince of Morocco chooses the casket.

If the reader still thinks that very young people do not enjoy Shakespeare, I submit the following, written by one of the youngest members of the class, and not one of the brightest by any means, as the English of her paper will attest. Margaret was twelve when she witnessed the scene and wrote her impressions.

> A scene was given of the suitors of Lady Portia which is part of the play of the Merchant of Venus in the hall room of the Hancock School. The play was acted very beautiful by the girls.
>
> Prince of Morocco comes in the apartments of Lady Portia dressed very splendid and with a haughty air of walking. A graceful low bow is

made which looks very pleasing. Morocco is a dark complexioned man who resembles like an African man. He is making his speech with eyes that are lingering on fair Portia's countenance. One of his famous stanzas is this:

Mislike me not for my complexion
The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,
To whom I am a neighbor and near bred.
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
Where Phoebus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,
And let us make incision for your love
To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.
I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine
Hath feared the valiant. I would not change
this hue
Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

Lady Portia replies that by the will of her father she cannot marry as she likes, but must follow her father's vow. Therefore Portia gives Morocco a key with which he will open a casket and there his fate would be told. He opens the golden casket with these words on his lips, "Some god direct my judgment!" but, alas, he has utterly failed and with sad eyes bids adieu.

The opportunity for soul expansion which this sort of thing offers is unparalleled, and the beautiful and noble lines memorized are a life-long possession. The class always wants to witness the scenes more than once, and each time they listen they are becoming more familiar with the words. It is the happiest

way imaginable for them to commit to memory.

After *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice* is a wise choice. With the development and training gained in the former, they approach the new play with a keener relish. Shakespeare has been tried and not found wanting. They endorse him thoroughly and their attitude is "Bring on anything of his, and we 'll take it gladly."

There are a great many difficult lines in this play, but there are a great many familiar and beautiful ones. There will be danger of losing interest if the long and philosophical speeches of the suitors are too minutely analyzed. If, however, the class is well seasoned with the Shakespeare flavor, a close study will be fruitful; with an intelligent class, after that study, many will voluntarily learn Bassanio's soliloquy which is profoundly philosophical.

The play as a whole is a great favorite, and stimulates thought as well as excites admiration. Shylock is always a great personality, — a mixture of purely human traits and monstrous wickedness, and he is pulsing with life like all of Shakespeare's men and women. The study of the people in this play is en-

grossing to the pupils and they will talk readily on the fine qualities of Portia, the weakness of Jessica, the sprightliness of Gratiano, the nonsense of Launcelot, the friendship between Bassanio and Antonio, and the wickedness and pathos of Shylock.

That they appreciate the beauty of language and the wisdom expressed by that language is shown by the enthusiasm they revealed in learning lines from the play. It was announced that on a certain day, in the following week, any one who had learned anything from *The Merchant of Venice* would have an opportunity to recite. There was no arbitrary fixing — they could commit two lines or fifty, as they chose. The result was as follows:

Every girl in a class of twenty-seven had learned a speech. The shortest one offered was six lines, the longest thirty. With few exceptions, there were not any two girls who learned the same selection, so that it was a delight to the others to hear the various lines recited. The selections showed the presence of real appreciation, evidenced by their good taste in choosing either for beauty or wit or wisdom.

In this play they dramatized, without any

suggestion from the teacher, the entire court scene and the scene in which Launcelot plagues Old Gobbo. Their courage in attacking a thing of this sort, in committing endlessly long speeches, is almost staggering to those of us who are not in the first flush of youth.

After all these months of reading and studying Shakespeare they usually manifest some interest in the great poet himself. They begin to place him in a niche apart. We had been enjoying his plays for some time, and I asked them to write on the title "What Shakespeare Means to Me." It was a risky topic, but one sometimes wishes to get a little glimpse into that spiritual self which they do not often express in the spoken word. These impressions of theirs were formed, not from studying about Shakespeare's life or his work, or from any information given by the teacher — for Shakespeare as a writer had not been mentioned. They were merely the childish expressions of the thoughts and feelings which Shakespeare's plays have aroused in them.

> He never writes any trash as nowadays some authors do. They are not fit to be called authors. He expresses his thoughts in a god-like way.

He makes his women cultured and stately, and there is always a brotherly love between men like Brutus and Cassius and Antonio and Bassanio.

I think Shakespeare was a very wise man, for in his plays he has written things that always happen as the different generations go by.

Shakespeare is to me the greatest writer. When I read his plays it seems as if a spell were cast over me which makes me want to read on and on until I have finished the play. No matter how many times I read one of his plays, the next time I read it, it will be just as interesting to me. This shows that he was a great writer.

He makes me realize better all the different kinds of people that lived and are living in this world.

Ever since I first read Shakespeare's plays, I've had a new feeling for reading and literature.

I wish that we could talk his language rather than ours, because his language is so musical. They placed the words in a different way.

He makes me see the different qualities in each person in his plays, better than any other author.

This is the first year I ever read anything in Shakespeare. I always thought that the best author was Dickens. Now that I read some of Shakespeare's plays I loved them better than

Dickens. When you are reading his plays, you feel awful nice.

Shakespeare is the greatest writer in the world. Why? Because, it seems to me, he has a very broad vision of everything. Almost nothing is left out. In looking over Shakespeare's work you will surely find some saying that applies to you or to something that has passed your way. Almost everything Shakespeare said is true.

I could n't think of Portia who is so queenly and dignified, being a swineherd's daughter, though, in fairy tales most of them (swineherds' daughters) are very beautiful and with a character like Portia's. The fairy tales are not true in this way.

Shakespeare seems to me like a god to be able to write such plays as he has written. He does n't tell you the wicked, humorous, good, or noble people that he puts in his plays, but lets you find out for yourself. I like his books better than anyone else's, I think, not if I read them by myself, but if some one explains them to me. His plays are not tiresome but make you want to read more. You will not find one of them like another but will find them altogether different from each other. He always puts all kinds of people in his plays and he always has a fine plot in them.

Shakespeare makes his characters seem like real human beings. He puts in all of them bad

and good qualities, as all real men have. Even wonderful Portia that all through the play you can't help thinking is a saint, has her fault.

Shakespeare knows there is no perfect being, so he has to add something in Portia, so she will be a real living soul, and this sentence proves she is no saint, "Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?" A saint certainly would have disagreed with Antonio when he demanded that the Jew become a Christian, but a *man* agrees, especially if he is of the same religion.

Shakespeare's fairy in the *Tempest* is like a real one. No other author ever made me believe that fairies exist, but Shakespeare made me wonder if perhaps they really do exist. All his characters are real living men.

The best books that I have ever read were ones that were written by Shakespeare. There is something about each book that keeps my whole attention, and my interest and after I have read one, I want to read more.

He puts such beautiful people into his plays and makes each one different from the other just as they naturally are.

Shakespeare uses such wonderful phrases in his plays and weaves such beautiful thoughts around his plots. By reading Shakespeare's words, one without knowing it adopts his phrases, and little by little uses better English and broader thoughts.

Shakespeare in my mind is a genius with greatness thrust upon him.

I have not as yet read much of any great writer's works but from the little that I have read of Shakespeare's plays it seems to me there is no writer equal to him. I love his fine way of outlining a play always with a fine plot, with scenes that always give you different feelings: first, perhaps a merry one then another that is sad. He always chooses the best type of woman to write about, that makes a reader feel as if they would like to follow the example of that character. I will admit that until this year, although I admired Shakespeare's work I had in my heart a hard feeling towards him. It never was explained to me correctly about the *Merchant of Venice*. Until this year I always thought that Shakespeare had an unkind feeling towards the Jewish race, so that was why he wrote that play, but now I know that he really did not do it because he had hate for them but he wrote in order to mark the way the Jew treated the Christian and the Christian the Jew. I am very glad that awful notion was taken away from me, for I could never read his plays in peace with it. His tragedies never lack some sort of fun, that sort of fun that makes the reader bubble with laughter. I once read *As You Like It* at home and all of a sudden I burst out laughing and frightened my mother. It is wonderful to think that he could take a dry story from some other writer and put so much charm into it so that it draws the reader to read more and more. He must have been a very fine broad-minded man to be able to see

into the future so well, for although we read his books written so many years ago, we find that many things are still true to life, and will be so for many years to come. Shakespeare uses such fine language that many of his words I add to my own vocabulary and many a time I bring in (at home) when talking at home many of his wise sayings. I hope that in years to come he will still be my favorite author. — (Written by a Jewish girl.)

William Shakespeare is one of the best English authors. He wrote mostly comedies and tragedies. His language in these books is of the old English style, but it is beautiful. His thoughts are wonderful and I wonder where he got those thoughts and beautiful words. In most of his stories he has a jester. The jesters are very funny. His plays are written in poetic style although the lines do not rhyme. His style of writing, the way he draws his characters, and the way he works up his climaxes should be observed by all. I have noticed that the climax of his plays often appears in the third act.

Shakespeare has done a great deal for me. In his stories he uses such beautiful language that he made me appreciate English.

Think what this world would be if we did not have joy to lighten our sorrows. Shakespeare, even though he has been dead a long time, leaves us his wonderful works of comedy, tragedy and philosophy to make us wise and

happy. In one of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Julius Caesar*, there is a line as follows: "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interrèd with their bones." Be that as it may, it is not so with Shakespeare. His honored memory will never be forgotten. Read a tragedy of Shakespeare's and you are thrilled to the depths of your soul. One of his comedies, even though it may make you laugh, contains wisdom that you wonder at. We are astonished at the great amount of knowledge he had of human nature.

In almost every line he has written is a solemn, philosophical meaning. His beautiful language charms the ear. There is always a touch of humor in his tragedies. I could read a play of his over and over but never does it become monotonous; on the contrary I understand it better each time. His marvelous works will live forever, never to be equalled. My homely language, in contrast to his, cannot express the feeling with which I regard him, but my consolation is that I can thank God for the wonderful genius he bestowed upon this man to enrich the world.

Two or three poems will help now to enshrine him in their hearts; the lines from Ben Jonson's verses:

To the Memory of My Beloved Master
William Shakespeare

Soul of the age!
The applause! delight! the wonder of our stage!

My Shakespeare rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spencer, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further off to make thee room;
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive, still, while thy Book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.

or those other quaint lines of Jonson, "On the Portrait of Shakespeare": —

This picture that thou here see'st put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the graver had a strife
With nature to outdo the life.
O could he but have drawn his wit
As well in brass, as he has hit
His face, the print would then surpass
All that was ever writ in brass;
But since he cannot, reader, look
Not on his picture, but his book.

or that majestic tribute from Milton, already quoted, than which nothing finer has been nor can in future be conceived; or, finally, those simple, appealing stanzas by our own Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

GULIELMUS REX

The folk who lived in Shakespeare's day
And saw that gentle figure pass
By London Bridge, his frequent way —
They little knew what man he was.

The pointed beard, the courteous mien,
The equal port to high and low,

All this they saw or might have seen —
But not the light behind the brow!

The doublet's modest gray or brown,
The slender sword-hilt's plain device,
What sign had these for prince or clown?
Few turned, or none, to scan him twice.

Yet 't was the king of England's kings!
The rest with all their pomps and trains
Are mouldered, half-remembered things —
'T is he alone that lives and reigns.

Such are the beginnings of the work on Shakespeare's plays. Such the joy and the intellectual development that thousands of children are having to-day where teachers follow natural, humane methods.

Never once in all this daily study should marks be mentioned. Never once should the pencil or the marking sheet make its appearance in a lesson on one of his plays. Of the mischievous influence of marks on the thinking and imagining power of the individual, a chapter might be written. The presence of a pencil in the hand of the teacher paralyzes what is best in thought; the mind is on the mark, on the teacher, on the idea of what the teacher wants, rather than on the real subject-matter. We must have marks, of course; they seem to be a necessary evil; but they should

never be made in the presence of the child in a literature lesson.

In *Education Moves Ahead*, by Eugene Randolph Smith, occurs this paragraph:

> Pupils who are continually marked soon become self-conscious and calculating. They say, not what springs naturally from their own experiences and ideas, but what seems likely to obtain a good mark. They quite naturally and wisely play upon the idiosyncracies of the teacher, quoting her book if she has written one, her favorite authority if she has n't. There is a certain stimulus to hypocrisy in such dealings, a tendency toward intellectual dishonesty that it is unfortunate to encourage. There is also of necessity an emphasis on the gap between pupils and teachers, on a kind of rivalry that sometimes becomes antagonism. The pupil becomes a salesman. He sells to the teacher as little knowledge as possible for as high a mark as he can get.

This is sound logic, and needs to be taken to heart by us all, who are apt, because of recent standardizing and measurement tests, to make a little god of the marking system. I doubt if any marks are really just. At all events, the literature period should be free from their blighting presence.

A pupil in literature should be marked for

the lighting up of an eye; for the smile of appreciation and the scowl of disapproval; for his general attitude toward the study, whether it be joyous and enthusiastic or dull and unwilling; these are the outward and visible signs of that which is inward and invisible and frequently betray more of the student's real comprehension than what he says.

These observations and the outlining of work in these pages are merely the expression of my own experience in teaching Shakespeare. They are only one way and, perhaps, compared with other ways, they will seem meagre and inadequate. There are as many methods as there are teachers, but there is only one test for all methods, and that is, *Does it make lovers of Shakespeare?* If it does that, no matter how simple, how elementary, it is a good one; if it does not — no matter how wise, how learned, how psychological — it is a failure.

The last word shall be spoken by Lafcadio Hearn, for no better counsel could be given, he being himself scholar, poet in the broad sense, man of letters, and teacher.

> This, for the time being, is the best advice that I can offer you. No possible study in English literature can be so valuable to you as that

of Shakespeare, if you follow it upon the sensible lines which I have attempted to indicate; for nothing has appeared since the age of Elizabeth that can bear comparison with even the worst of his work, nor is it likely that in another hundred years anything of equal genius can be produced.

SUGGESTIVE LESSON

Poem to be studied: "The Solitary Reaper" by William Wordsworth

THE lesson is planned for an eighth or ninth grade. It is suitable for a lower grade if simplified; for a higher, if amplified. It is assumed that the pupils have already read and enjoyed some of Wordsworth's familiar poems; that they are able to quote from those poems certain well-known lines; that Wordsworth himself is now something more than a name, because they have had before them for some time pictures of the poet, of his home in Grasmere, and of the beautiful lake country in England where he drew his inspiration.

Teacher: We are going to read something from Wordsworth to-day. Try to recall, please, any poem of his that you have read.
Pupil: "The Reverie of Poor Susan."
Second pupil: "To the Cuckoo."
Third pupil: "The Pet Lamb."
Fourth pupil: "We are Seven."
Teacher: You have remembered very well; can you recall one written to a flower?

Pupil: Yes, there is the poem "To the Small Celandine."

Teacher: And a charming one it is, too. Can you quote from it?

Pupil:

> There 's a flower that shall be mine;
> 'T is the little celandine.

Teacher: Does anybody remember the stanza about astronomers?

Pupil: I remember a little of it:

> Eyes of some men travel far
> For the finding of a star.

Teacher:

> Up and down the heavens they go,
> Men that make a mighty rout.
> I 'm as great as they I trow
> Since the day I found thee out,
> Little flower, I 'll make a stir
> Like a sage astronomer.

I wish we had time to quote it all, it is so very beautiful; perhaps before another lesson, some one will have learned it and be able to recite it all to us.

There is a little gem, beginning

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky.

Can any one go on with that?

Pupil:

> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die.

Teacher: Very good; that is well worth remembering. You have omitted one of his best known poems, — let me give you one line from it:

A poet could not but be gay —

Chorus: I know — I know — "The Daffodils."
Teacher: But don't leave my quotation unfinished, please.
Pupil:

A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company.
I gazed and gazed, but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.

Teacher: I'm glad those four lines are yours. Can any one else quote from "The Daffodils"?
Pupil:

I wandered lonely as a cloud.

Teacher: Yes, that is a very pretty beginning. Does anybody recall any other bit?
Pupil:

Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them —

Teacher: Who remembers the rest?
Pupil:

The waves beside them danced
But they outdid the sparkling waves in glee.

Teacher: Nobody has quoted the most famous stanza.

Pupil:

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way.

Teacher: That is very beautiful — but it is not the best known.

Pupil:

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.

Teacher: Yes, that is the one, and I think I can tell you why people like that verse the best. You know often we like a bit of verse or a picture or a melody without knowing just why. But this stanza of Wordsworth's expresses in a very simple and beautiful way a universal truth. Now what is a universal truth? Well, it is something that is true everywhere in the world. It is as true, for instance, of people in the Samoan Islands as of those in New York City. It is as true of the black man as of the white; of the educated as of the uneducated. Now let us see just what this universal truth which I speak of is. Who will recite the whole stanza for us?

Pupil:

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,

> And then my heart with pleasure fills
> And dances with the daffodils.

Teacher: What does he mean by pensive mood?
Pupil: He means he is sad or thoughtful.
Another pupil: He means that he is dreamy.
Teacher: Very good. Now what does he mean when he says, "They flash upon that inward eye"?
Pupil: While he is lying down, suddenly the picture of the daffodils, just as he saw them on his walk, comes before his mind.
Teacher: And are poets the only people who have these inward eyes?
Pupil: No, everybody has an inward eye.
Teacher: How fortunate for the blind that God has blessed us with two kinds of sight! The blind man gets supreme joy from his inward eye. Why is the inward eye the "bliss of solitude"?
Pupil: Because wnen we are alone we can see things in imagination and that makes us happy.
Teacher: Just so! Now let us all close our eyes for a moment and let some picture flash upon our inward eye. (After a pause.) Well, what did you see?
Pupil: I saw my mother and my nouse.
Second pupil: I saw the baby.
Third pupil: I saw our summer camp in the woods.
Fourth pupil: (Feminine gender) I saw my new dress.
Teacher: I saw the Saco River with Mt. Washing-

ton in the distance — as I have seen it often in the summer. You see what a blessing this inward eye is. Now to go back. You remember I said this stanza expressed a universal truth. Let us see why. You have just shown me that there are beautiful memories and images that may visit you and give you joy when your outward eye can no longer see them. These images did not happen to be daffodils as was the case with Wordsworth, and they did not happen to be a river, as was the case with me. You see the picture must vary just as our lives vary, but the truth remains the same; that is, that all of us possess this inward eye and that it gives us great joy in solitude. And because this is true of every one in the universe, we call it a universal truth. Let us be on the watch for these universal truths. The greater the poet, the oftener he speaks them, but you do not find one always in every poem of even a very great poet.

There is a very beautiful universal truth in the poem for reading to-day. I will ask you for it later. (Teacher reads poem.)

The Solitary Reaper

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands;
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard,
In springtime from the cuckoo bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings? —
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

What e'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending; —
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

(NOTE: The class should always have a copy of the poem before them, either on the blackboard, or on typewritten sheets if books are not available. In this way they perceive through the eye as well as through the ear, and the impression made is doubly strong.)

Teacher: Now let us study the meaning a little more carefully. Is there anything in the poem that tells you where the maiden lived?

Pupil: I think she lived in Scotland because he calls her a Highland Lass.

Teacher: Very good reasoning; and what is the little Scotch maiden doing?

Pupil: She's cutting the grain with a sickle and binding it in sheaves, and singing.

Teacher: How do you know she was working alone?

Pupil: Because he speaks of her as solitary.

Teacher: Find other allusions to her as being alone.

Second pupil: "single in the field."

Third pupil: "singing by herself."

Fourth pupil: "alone she cuts the grain."

Teacher: What two lines give you the most complete and perfect picture?

Pupil:

> Behold her, single in the field,
> Yon solitary Highland Lass!

Teacher: I cannot agree with you; it is a beautiful picture, but not so complete as two other lines.

Pupil: I think the lines are:

> Alone she cuts and binds the grain
> And sings a melancholy strain.

Teacher: Yes, certainly the poet tells us a great deal in those few words. Just consider for a moment what he reveals in those twelve words. What is the very first fact that we learn about the maiden?

Pupil: That she is cutting the grain.

Teacher: Is that the *first?*

Pupil: He tells us first of all that she is alone.
Teacher: Precisely. Now what is the next fact?
Pupil: That she is cutting and binding the grain.
Teacher: But is that not two facts?
Pupil: That she is cutting the grain.
Teacher: Exactly; and the next?
Pupil: That she is binding it in sheaves.
Teacher: And the next?
Pupil: That she is singing a sad song.
Teacher: Yes, there are really two facts here: that she is singing and that the song is a sad one. Now, how many facts in all about the maiden has he given us in these two short lines?
Pupil: I think there are five different things told us.
Teacher: Is not that a marvellous use of words? Do you think you or I could say in twelve words five distinct things? And yet it is all so simple and beautiful we do not realize how much he is telling us. It is this that makes him a great poet. Select, please, in this stanza a line that is beautiful either for sound or music or imagery.
Pupil: "Yon solitary Highland lass."
Teacher: Very good. One likes to hear those words just for the sound. Is there anything else that pleases you particularly?
Pupil:

> O listen! for the vale profound
> Is overflowing with the sound.

Teacher: Yes, those two are lines that haunt one's memory. There is a valley in the White Mountains which I can never see without re-

calling those two lines. Try, now, to picture the scene. Will some one tell us what she sees?

Pupil: I see a deep valley with mountains on all sides. A girl is the only person in the whole valley. She is in a field of grain. I think it is oats. She is bending over with a sickle, cutting the oats, and when she has cut enough, she ties them in a sheaf.

Teacher: That is a very attractive picture; does any one see anything more?

Pupil: The sky is blue with white clouds. It is a pleasant day in the summer-time.

Teacher: Yes, but do you not hear something?

Pupil: I hear the girl singing.

Teacher: Can you hear the actual song?

Pupil: Yes, ma'am.

Teacher: How many hear the song?

(*An obliging number who desire to be agreeable answer in the affirmative. Another group, clearer headed and more accurate, show some suspicion and apprehension.*)

Teacher: Well, I cannot hear the melody itself, but I can hear a sweet girlish voice singing, and her pure high notes fill the whole valley; it is a glorious sound, but I could not sing it to you, nor could I tell you the words she sings.

(*Mental relief is now shown on each face, and the atmosphere is cleared.*)

Teacher: The poet is so completely fascinated by the scene and the song that he does not move. What words indicate this?

Pupil: He says: "Stop here, or gently pass."

Teacher: What other time did Wordsworth stop to observe a little country girl?

Pupil: In "The Pet Lamb" he tells of watching the little girl when she is feeding the lamb.

Teacher: Can anybody give his exact words?

Pupil: "I unobserved could watch the workings of her face."

Teacher: Good! Now let us see what he thought of the Scotch lassie's voice.

(*Pupil reads aloud second verse*)

Teacher: With what bird does he compare her voice?

Pupil: With the nightingale's.

Teacher: That is surely high praise, but I think her voice excels even the nightingale's. Do you see why?

Pupil: Because it is the nightingale singing in a shady place in the desert. The song seems to the travelers more wonderful because they have been in the hot desert.

Teacher: Yes, just as rain is more blessed after a long hot summer day.

To what other bird does he liken her voice?

Pupil: To the cuckoo.

Teacher: Was Wordsworth fond of the cuckoo?

Pupil: Yes, he wrote a poem to the cuckoo.

Teacher: Do you remember any of the pretty names he used in speaking to the bird?

Pupil: He called it "blithe newcomer."

Teacher: Yes; anything else?

Pupil: He said, "Thrice welcome, darling of the spring."

Teacher: Anything else?
Pupil:

> And thou wert still a hope, a love,
> Still longed for, never seen.

Teacher: That's fine. Did he say anything else very complimentary?
Pupil:

> O blessed bird, the earth we pace
> Again appears to be
> An unsubstantial fairy place
> That is fit home for thee.

Teacher: I'm so glad you remember that last stanza. There is no doubt Wordsworth had a special fondness for the cuckoo; now notice, please, whether he puts the Highland girl's music on a plane with the cuckoo's or above it.
Pupil: I think he likes the girl's song better.
Teacher: What makes you think so?
Pupil: He says:

> A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
> In springtime from the cuckoo bird,
> Breaking the silence of the seas
> Among the farthest Hebrides.

Teacher: Let us look up these islands. If you look at the map of the British Isles you will see them. (*After a pause.*) Who finds them? Well, Jane, where are they?
Pupil: Off the coast of Scotland.
Teacher: Yes, and they are noted for their picturesque scenery. What a beautiful atmos-

phere he has created in these four lines! The springtime, the still waters, the beautiful islands, all wrapped in a silence broken only by the notes of the cuckoo. Read to yourselves the next stanza. I am going to see how much you get from it.

(*After silent study*)

Teacher: The poet is distressed about something; what is it?

Pupil: He can't understand the words of the song.

Teacher: Why not? He is not in a foreign country is he?

(*General puzzlement*)

Teacher: You told me she was a Scotch Highlander. Can't you guess then why he does not understand?

Pupil: Perhaps their language is different.

Another pupil: I know a Scotchman and he talks funny.

Another pupil: I can understand Harry Lauder.

Teacher: Yes, but are there not some words even in Harry Lauder's songs that are not familiar to you? What we call the broad Scotch is very difficult to understand. You remember Robert Burns's poem, "A man 's a man for a' that" had some lines that were wholly unintelligible to us because we did not know the Scotch. Wordsworth evidently was not familiar with the Scotch dialect and so he was greatly puzzled. But although he does not know just what the song is about, he does know at least one thing about it.

Can you tell what that is?

Pupil: He knows that it is a sad song.
Teacher: What words tell you that?
Pupil: He says "plaintive numbers."
Teacher: Is there anything else that tells you it must be sad?
Pupil: He says it may be about

> Old, unhappy, far-off things
> And battles long ago.

Then he says it may be about

> Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain
> That has been and may be again.

Teacher: Yes, how wonderful those four lines are! They mean so much and yet they are so very simple! Notice the words — "Old, unhappy, far-off things" and all they convey. Remember when you are writing, yourself, that nearly always the great literature is simple. And now we come to the last stanza. This is so marvellously beautiful that it almost spoils it to talk about it. Let me read it to you once more.

> Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
> As if her song could have no ending;
> I saw her singing at her work,
> And o'er the sickle bending; —
> I listened, motionless and still;
> And, as I mounted up the hill,
> The music in my heart I bore,
> Long after it was heard no more.

What would you select as the most perfect part of the stanza?

Pupil:

I listened motionless and still;
And as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Teacher: And of these four, if you could have only two lines — what two would you select?

Pupil:

The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Teacher: Yes—I never knew any one to fail to choose those two lines. I am not going to question you on this last stanza. It is too beautiful to be analyzed. I will only ask you if you can find in these eight lines a universal truth. First tell me what a universal truth is.

Pupil: Something that is true all over the universe.

Another pupil: Something that everybody feels or knows.

Teacher: Yes, you are both right. Now search for the truth.

Pupil:

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending.

Teacher: Does every maiden sing at her work? I'm afraid you have n't the idea.

Pupil:

The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Teacher: What do you think he means by music?

Pupil: The song of the girl.

Teacher: Yes, but suppose it had not been a song that had charmed him. Suppose it had been a beautiful scene or a lovely face — would he not bear that in his heart afterward? Then what might music express in a large sense?

Pupil: Anything that is beautiful.

Teacher: Precisely, just as we use the word poetry for what is beautiful — poetry of motion, etc. What beautiful things can you think of that might stay in your memory long after you saw them?

First pupil: A flower.

Second pupil: A child.

Third pupil: A poem.

Fourth pupil: A picture.

Teacher: Yes, and might not a very happy experience also remain in your memory to give you delight? I am going to ask you to think about this and to be ready to tell me to-morrow of something — the music of which you still bear in your heart, although the thing itself is in the past.

Let us read the poem now from beginning to end and see how perfect it is when we do not stop for analysis. Who would like to try it? We want to hear the music and to feel the beauty of it.

(*Pupil reads*)

Teacher: That was fairly well done. Let us have some criticisms.

One pupil: She read too fast.

Another pupil: She did n't put feeling enough in it.

Another pupil: She did n't bring out the important words.

Teacher: Very well. Let us try again. Who will read it and keep in mind these suggestions?

(*Pupil reads*)

After repeating this process once or twice the poem has become familiar to them.

Teacher: I wonder if you could repeat this poem together without your books. Let us try.

(A surprisingly large number of lines is given and, with the help of the teacher, they go through to the end. Another day, if it is taken up, they will easily master it in ten or fifteen minutes.)

Teacher: Before we leave the poem there is something I want to ask you. Think, please, of this Highland Lass as a girl whom you might know. Picture her, if you will, in her own home. Some friends have come, and as she has a very pretty voice, her mother asks her to sing for them. Please fill in the picture the best you can. Now do you think the song would be as pleasing?

Pupil: I don't think it would be nearly so nice as it was before.

Teacher: Why not?

Pupil: She is n't outdoors. Music is nicer outdoors.

Teacher: Ah, that is surely true. Can you recall a poem we read some time ago in which just this idea is set forth?

Pupil: (*After some delay*) Yes, in "Each and All."

Teacher: Excellent. Can you give me any lines?

Pupil:

All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.

Teacher: Those are wise and true words, but they do not apply to this poem particularly, as some others do.

Pupil:

I thought the sparrow's note from heaven
Singing at dawn on the alder bough:
I brought him home in his nest at even,
He sings his song but it cheers not now.
For I did not bring home the river and sky
He sang to my ear; they sang to my eye.

Teacher: Notice that last line,

He sang to my ear; they sang to my eye.

So with Wordsworth, the valley, the hills, the sky, perhaps the beauty of the maiden herself — all these sang to his eye — while her notes charmed his ear. Can you draw any conclusion then as to the value of Emerson's poem "Each and All"?

Pupil: It's very good.

Another pupil: It's wise.

Still another pupil: It's true.

Teacher: Yes; any other opinion?

Pupil: It's true always, so it's a universal truth.

Teacher: Exactly; but notice, please, how he spoke that truth.

All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.

Then he proceeded to prove it by examples from his own experience. Emerson you see was teaching us a lesson. Wordsworth, on the contrary, is merely telling us an exquisite story.

> The music in my heart I bore,
> Long after it was heard no more.

Here is a simple little narrative of a very lovely thing that happened to him. Yet we all know that that same thing happens to us, and it delights us to find it put in such a simple, beautiful way. Now which way do you like best — Emerson's way or Wordsworth's?

Pupil: I like Wordsworth's.

Teacher: Yes, I think we shall all agree on that point. He does not preach; he merely touches our hearts; and that is why his best poems are so great and so beloved. Perhaps some of you will like to learn "The Solitary Lass" and entertain us with it to-morrow.